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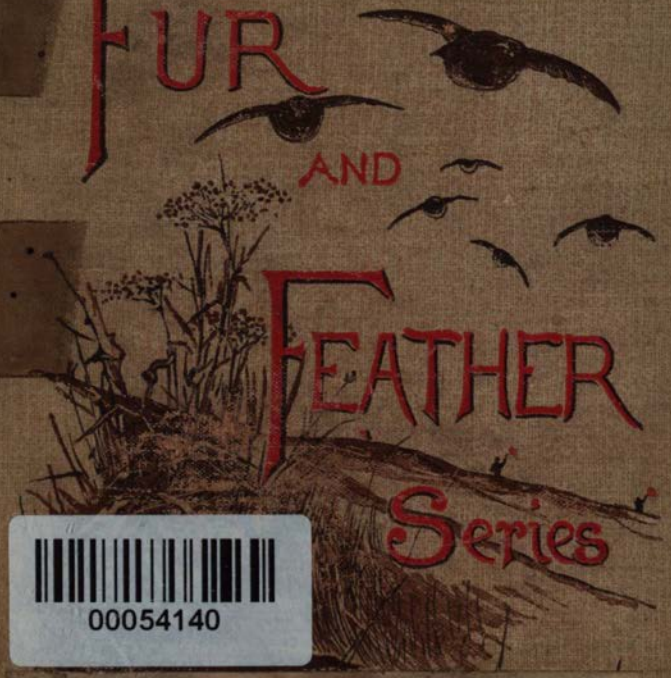

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THE PARTRIDGE

FUR AND FEATHER SERIES.

EDITED BY ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

THE PARTRIDGE. *NATURAL HISTORY*—By the Rev. H. A. MACPHERSON.—*SHOOTING*—By A. J. STUART-WORTLEY.—*COOKERY*—By GEORGE SAINTSBURY. With Illustrations by A. THORBURN, A. J. STUART-WORTLEY, and C. WHYMPER. Crown 8vo. 5*s*.

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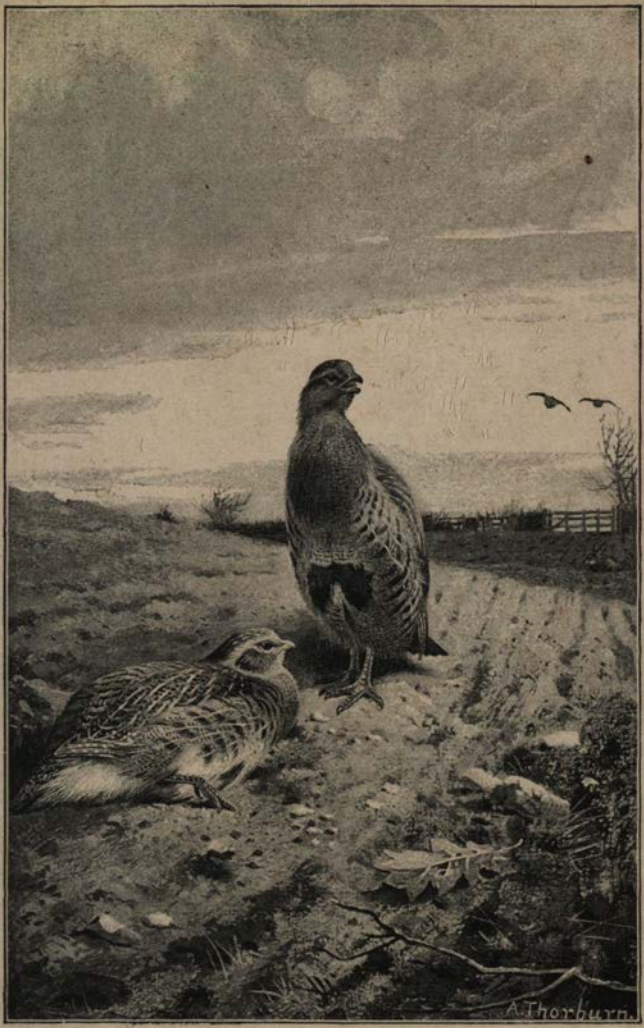

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NATURAL HISTORY

BY THE REV. H. A. MACPHERSON

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BY A. J. STUART-WORTLEY

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SECOND EDITION

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PREFACE

THE design of the *Fur and Feather Series* is to present monographs, as complete as they can possibly be made, on the various English birds and beasts which are generally included under the head of Game.

Books on Natural History cover such a vast number of subjects that their writers necessarily find it impossible to deal with each in a really comprehensive manner; and it is not within the scope of such works exhaustively to discuss the animals described, in the light of objects of sport. Books on sport, again, seldom treat at length of the Natural History of the furred and feathered creatures which are shot or otherwise taken; and, so far as the Editor is aware, in no book hitherto published on Natural History or Sport has information been given as to the best methods of turning the contents of the bag to account.

Each volume of the present Series will, therefore, be devoted to a bird or beast, and will be divided into three parts. The Natural History of the variety will first be given; it will then be considered from the point of view of sport; and the writer of the third division will assume that the creature has been carried to the larder, and will proceed to discuss it gastronomically. The origin of the animals will be traced, their birth and breeding described, every known method of circumventing and killing them—not omitting the methods employed by the poacher—will be explained with special regard to modern developments, and they will only be left when on the table in the most appetising forms which the delicate science of cookery has discovered.

It is intended to make the illustrations a prominent feature in the Series. The pictures in the present volume are after drawings by Mr. A. J. Stuart-Wortley, Mr. A. Thorburn, and Mr. C. Whymper; all of which, including the diagrams, have been arranged under the supervision of the first-named.

ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

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BY

A. J. STUART-WORTLEY, A. THORBURN, AND C. WHYMPER

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NATURAL HISTORY OF THE PARTRIDGE

BY THE

REV. H. A. MACPHERSON

CHAPTER I

THE PARTRIDGE AT HOME AND ABROAD

OUR national traditions are so closely associated with this favourite game-bird, that its presence could as ill be spared from our midst in these breech-loading days as when it afforded sport to our hawking ancestors. Few will deny the pleasure that the partridge has conferred upon their rambles amid homely scenery, startling them with its abrupt departure from some clover field, or breaking in upon the stillness of a summer evening by the iteration of its harsh, unmusical call-note. Whether we wander over the downs of the south coast, climb the slopes of northern oat-fields, or thread our way through the rich pasture lands of the Thames valley, we cannot easily forget the presence of this familiar bird or sever the chain of memories which the whirr of its short wings speedily awakens. This feeling has grown upon most of us so strongly that our English meadows would seem to be bereft of one of their most potent

charms if there were no 'brown birds' to be spied stealing away through the wild profusion of orchids and other wild flowers that scent the air so heavily, warned of our intrusion by the sound of our quiet footsteps, which, to their acute senses, are full of meaning. We question, indeed, whether even the grouse holds as high a position in popular favour as the unobtrusive partridge. The latter certainly enjoys a wider distribution than any other British game-bird; indeed, the grouse would have been exterminated ere this but for the intervention of landowners and lessees of shootings, whereas even the English labourer, radical though his creed may be, possesses a sneaking regard for the partridge. More than that, all country dwellers really love the bird for its own sake, and exercise a healthy emulation in the solicitude which they evince about its safety. It owes a great deal also to the protective coloration of its prettily pencilled plumage, to its cautious traits of character, and unpretentious presence. Besides, it is always with us, nestling in the fields of the home farm, straying into the garden or the orchard, seeking the neighbourhood of men, depending for its existence in great part upon the results of human industry. Variable and uncertain as our insular climate must be admitted to be, we rarely experience more than a few

weeks of severe protracted frost on the lower grounds which the partridge haunts—a fact which enables it to maintain its footing in almost every part of the country. The struggle for existence is no doubt serious as it is at certain times and in special localities ; but our insular stock of birds is fully equal to any strain imposed upon its resources by heavy falls of snow or continued spells of drought. The increase or decrease of British partridges is indeed affected by the dryness or humidity of the spring and summer months, which have a great influence upon young broods. Nor can we deny that the conditions of a physical character, that closely affect game-preserving, are diversified by local circumstances or by circumstances altered by artificial steps. Every one will admit that rearing partridges in the wet climate of Skye, and on poor ground, is quite a different thing from raising them on the highly-farmed lands which afford the best partridge shooting in Aberdeenshire or in the vicinity of the Norfolk Broads. But the partridge solves the problem of existence better, on the whole, than might be expected, though we do not mean that every attempt to introduce partridges is likely to succeed, for such experiments have failed signally, even when outward circumstances appeared to be most promising.

On the contrary, some attempts at the colonisation of partridges proved full of disappointment, the strange stock becoming extinct in a very short time, and leaving no trace of its existence. The same may be said, however, of almost any species that we try to naturalise in a strange locality. Patience and persevering forethought often repair faults of judgment and bear lasting fruit. But the partridge is to be found in most parts of Britain—at any rate of the mainland; nor is it absent from Ireland, small as the reputation of that island may be for anything but bog-trotting. The fact that this bird exists in regions so diversified argues a large amount of shrewdness, both in adapting its habits to its environment, and equally in the choice of its environment. The very changes which time has wrought in the appearance of any countryside have their own story to tell. The destruction of old-fashioned double hedges, the transformation of commons and moorlands into highly-farmed tillage, the conversion of tillage into large grazing farms, changes in the crops we grow, should all be taken into consideration by any one who essayed to show the close relation which the partridge bears to its native soil. Happily, this species possesses sufficient pliancy of character to become readily inured to a new régime of farming,

without decreasing in numbers or losing weight of substance. Most people regard the partridge as one of the most local of creatures, and would scout any suggestion of its being a migratory bird. It is not a migratory bird in the same sense as the landrail or the swallow ; our own insular race of partridge is content to remain upon our shores, come what may ; so far as we know it prefers 'short commons' to a flight that would extend even across the English Channel, and resides for the most part in one and the same district throughout the year, whatever happens. It is true, however, that from time to time a covey of partridges lands in a more or less exhausted state upon the beach of our eastern or southern coast, under circumstances which render the hypothesis of a covey of Dutch or Belgian partridges crossing the German Ocean perfectly tenable. But, however plausible such a suggestion may appear, we should, on the whole, shrink from accepting it as proven upon any but the strongest evidence. It would be more safe to surmise that, though the birds in question may have flown in from sea, they had previously left some neighbouring point of our own coast, and had deflected from their course to catch up the land again. This view gains probability from the reflection that we never hear of partridges boarding

vessels at sea, though landrails and other short-winged birds frequently rest on sailing crafts during their migratory journeys. While thus limiting the migrations of the partridge, we would have it understood that our remarks on this head refer only to our island birds. On the Continent the partridge is probably a more decided migrant, or semi-migrant, than in our country, since it is exposed to greater extremes of heat and cold, whilst its movements are hampered only by such imperfect barriers as mountain ranges or great rivers present. Even in Britain the partridge is a quasi-migrant, since coveys frequently perform short journeys—as, for example, across the Solway Firth. In this case the birds are apparently shifting from the slopes of the Dumfriesshire hills to the well-cultivated lands of the Cumbrian plain—a journey of small extent, but involving their at least crossing the breadth of the Solway Firth where it contracts its area between the Sark and Esk. The natural inference is that the partridge has no objection to cross a mile or two of water, so that its continental range can hardly be limited by the courses of rivers. It would be unwise to push this point too far. That many partridges remain the greater part of the year in one and the same district we do not doubt. Indeed, it has been proved by intelligent

men, who have recognised white and pied birds which could not be mistaken for strangers.

The range of the partridge in Britain includes such a variety of districts, from the water-meadows of the midlands to the slopes of western isles that are bathed in the mists of the Atlantic for many months of the year, that we can hardly affect surprise at learning that its range in Europe is very extensive, as becomes a hardy and vigorous species, which has maintained its position in the face of many difficulties. It is not found in Eastern Asia, where its place is taken by an allied species, smaller in size, having the horse-shoe of the breast deep black instead of chestnut, as in our home bird. The only other representative of the Old World genus to which our partridge belongs, and of which it is the type, must be looked for in Thibet and along the Himalayas from the borders of Cashmere to Sikkim. This has a prominent horse-shoe, but is more distantly related to our bird. The latter is local in Asia east of the Urals, but appears to be generally distributed over the steppes of Southern Russia. Nor is the partridge peculiar to the steppe region. Of recent years its range has extended northwards, and now embraces governments to which it was an entire stranger within the knowledge of many residents. It seems, in fact,

destined to increase and multiply in the vast grain-producing regions of that country, though its numbers are checked, if not decimated, by scarcity of food in winters of great severity. From Russia the partridge extends its range into Poland and Northern Germany, while to the south-east its presence can be traced to the northern frontiers of Greece. Indeed, it is the most plentiful of all game-birds in Bulgaria, and likewise in Macedonia. We have ourselves seen it in greater abundance in the Rhine provinces than in any other part of the German Empire; the most highly cultivated plains naturally supply the most favourable breeding grounds for these birds. In France it is less common in the south of the country than in the northern and central departments. It is replaced by our own partridge in most parts of Spain, but holds its ground in the northern portion of the peninsula. We perfectly well remember the gratification with which we marked a pair of grey partridges that rose from a small roadside cover, as we drove one spring day through one of the wildest districts of fair Navarre, little expecting to find our old favourites in an arid region which seemed to present but scanty attraction for a species that delights to luxuriate in English meadows, full of lush, juicy grass and buttercups, and teeming with a variety of minute forms of insect life.

In the north of Europe the partridge is but sparsely represented, as might be inferred from the prevailing conditions of physical life. In Belgium, as in the north of France, the bird is thoroughly at home on well-cultivated lands—a remark that applies to Holland as well, though the partridge frequents the moors of that country as well as the cornfields. Similarly, it is found commonly in most parts of Denmark—a fact worth noting, for it becomes scarce on the other side of the Cattegat. It was not, indeed, indigenous to Norway, so far as we know, having made its first voluntary appearance in that country about the year 1744, according to the calculations of Professor Collett, who states that the migrating host entered Norway from Sweden, and was followed by a second party of colonists from the same quarter about the year 1811. The latter movement was of great importance, as enabling the species to spread over a large portion of Southern Norway. Its distribution in that country is limited to the more fertile valleys ; at least, it is so restricted under ordinary circumstances, but not exclusively. Instances of the partridge straying to higher elevations have been authenticated, as happened in the year 1860, when a covey of these birds made their appearance upon the Fillefjeld, at an altitude of 3,200 feet above the level of the sea. The

species was not originally found in any part of Scandinavia, but its introduction into Sweden is believed to have occurred as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century. It is resident in Sweden, in suitable situations, as far north as 60° north latitude, a limit which is frequently exceeded in favourable seasons, when the birds often succeed in pushing northward, and even maintain their footing in such boreal regions until an extra severe winter decimates their ranks, and compels the survivors to retreat further south. It is interesting to notice that in Scandinavia and Russia the partridge is much persecuted by birds of prey. In the British Isles our falcons were, no doubt, to blame in former days. When hen harriers abounded in Lincolnshire, we can well believe that partridges were scarce, however excellent the pristine stubble of our forefathers may have been in the days when scythes and reaping machines were entirely unknown.

The goshawk, which is such a deadly foe to partridges on the Continent, has never been sufficiently plentiful in the British Isles to do the game preserve a mischief. On the other hand, the hen harrier must have claimed many a victim. The harriers have now become rare in most parts of Britain; they always exhibited a spice of daring

wherever they were suffered to exist. Some thirteen years ago a Christchurch friend of ours was taking a country walk near Oxford, when a beautiful hen harrier singled out a fine partridge and struck it down dead at his feet. Similarly, the kite must have accounted for a few young partridges in the days when kites were common in this country, to judge from the pertinacity with which we have seen a fine red kite hovering morning after morning over a field in which a covey of young partridges lay concealed.

Doubtless the young of all the game-birds are much exposed to enemies, both furred and feather, during the first few days of their existence. The bravery with which the helpless chicks are defended from their enemies by their parents—be the odds against them what they may—will always claim a certain share of admiration. This feeling is strengthened by the pacific appearance of the partridge, which possesses a larger modicum of courage and of self-devotion than those who know little of its habits might be inclined to give it credit for.

CHAPTER II

PARTRIDGES IN THE FIELDS

THE partridge is one of the most sociable of game-birds, at least during the greater part of the year. The season of love, it is true, develops its disposition to find happiness in monogamy; but the gregarious habits characterising birds of this genus are soon resumed, even if suspended for a few weeks, in obedience to the laws of increase. The incautious individuals of the race were long ago exterminated by their natural enemies, and the survivors are the descendants of such individuals as proved to be as superior in craft to their less fortunate fellows as they were found to be in the lists of love. Thus it has come about that no covey of birds seeks to roost in thick cover, or in undisciplined order. The senses of these persecuted birds have been so preternaturally sharpened in course of time that they avoid cover at night-time, and 'jug' together in the open field, taking advantage of any natural features of the ground

that serve to enhance the security of their camping ground. Out in the open meadow the slightest noise is heard readily enough. Thus the chance of a fox or any other wild animal stealing upon them unawares is reduced to a minimum. Not only is the preternatural intuition of danger peculiar to the old male bird of a covey constantly exercised, but each and every individual is on the alert at the slightest warning, and their risk is thus considerably reduced. Of course there are careful observers up and down the country who declare that the partridge has fallen upon hard times. They complain dolefully enough that wire fencing is in the ascendent, and that the old-fashioned hedges which gave good cover to the birds in the nesting-time have been grubbed up in many instances. They point mournfully to the general adoption of newfangled methods of farming, and lament the substitution of the mowing-machine for the scythe. In their eyes there was more merit in a sickle than in the latest and most completely furnished reaping-machine. The primitive implements of husbandry that satisfied farmers of the old school are good enough, they argue, for all reasonable requirements at the present day. 'Fifty years ago the use of the scythe was partially, of the reaping-machine wholly, unknown. It is true that where

clean farming prevailed stubbles had ceased to be what they once were, a dwarf jungle; but they still afforded capital cover for partridges, and gave pointers and setters at once a chance and a use. Nowadays, however, we may search parish after parish in all the best arable counties before we find a good old-fashioned stubble, and if one by any accident exists, no sooner are the gleaners out than the wheat-haulmers are in, and autumn culture destroys all the hopes of the sportsmen.'[1] This mournful picture requires to be discounted by many other considerations.

The partridge is more at home, no doubt, on highly tilled land than where the soil is poor, and a warm open country supplies many of its needs; but it has never been exclusively a bird of the homestead. True, it is always ready to take advantage of improvements, and thrives best where the soil is rich and genial; yet it has a marked partiality for moorland and mixed cover—some of the prettiest partridge-shooting over dogs is still afforded by unreclaimed heaths and mosses. 'Moor partridges are wild-bred birds, which have been brought out on the moors, which are separated, in our southern counties, only by a splashed bank from the cornfields. Having been

[1] *Quarterly Review*, 1873.

hatched out on the moor, they, together with old birds, naturally frequent it, and they "jug" or squat closely together there at night. The fields are visited certainly, but the principal food supply will be gleaned from their wild hatching-out place; and they fly farther and run longer distances, also they are a little smaller and darker than those that keep entirely to the corn and the root lands. The food they get on the moors is, in a great degree, like that of the black-cock and red grouse, and their flesh is naturally darker than that of the other birds. The coveys found on the moors are wilder also, and far more gun-shy, than are those of the lower grounds. When they are on the wing, you can very often watch them fly clean out of sight without dropping. These little differences are all I have been able to observe between the two, and in the Surrey heath-lands we have a goodly number of these birds.'[1]

But these outlying coveys of partridges are not peculiar to the south of England. A small race of grey partridge exists on the slopes of our northern fells, and has probably done so from time immemorial, in spite of the disadvantages attending upon its residence among the wild hills of the Pennine range. The shelter which they obtain is far inferior to that

[1] *Pall Mall Magazine.*

afforded by the richer meadowlands that lie in the valleys below, snugly screened from the blast of the east wind, which cuts like a knife and sometimes levels everything that opposes its free progress. During the early part of the year, heavy snow-wreaths cover up the favourite nooks of the partridge for many weeks in succession, or the pitiless rain fills the ghylls of the mountains, so that they rise in flood and overflow their narrow banks. But the partridge heeds not the havoc and confusion of the elements. In the face of a thousand disadvantages, this sturdy native doggedly maintains an uphill fight for existence, and on the whole with a very fair measure of success; waiting hopefully for the solace of courtship, and the joys of the nesting season, to reimburse him for a sheaf of hardships.

After all, the fell partridge possesses some special advantages. He gleans many a ripe berry, and knows how to adapt himself to difficulties better than his fellow in the low-country. Nor is he a starveling. 'Plump and well-conditioned' is the verdict given by most sportsmen of the hill race of partridges—at least, if shot in the months of autumn, before the hardships of winter-time have pinched his frame; the slightly inferior size of the sub-alpine bird is no great drawback to any one except pot-hunters, a class of gentlemen who need little consideration.

How the fell partridge thrives, and by what exercise of strategy he manages to elude the vigilant attention of the greyhound foxes that are always roaming over the fells, can best be explained by the shepherds whose duties necessitate the devotion of their lives to the charge of the flocks which wander over the hill pastures. These uneducated men take an intelligent interest in the welfare of all the wild creatures that share with them the solitudes of the remote uplands. Quiet and undemonstrative in their exterior, they can often tell a good story by the side of a peat fire; nor do they disdain to relate their simple every-day experiences with fur and feather, beguiling their narrative with an occasional spice of dry and wholesome mother-wit.

It is to these fell folk that you must go if you desire to learn whether the ravens are nesting this season in the same beetling precipice from which their young ones flew last year in safety, or whether the white vixen fox is still inhabiting her earth below the discarded quarry, or to hear the earliest news of the cuckoo's arrival among the persecuted 'moss-cheepers.'

They are sparing of words, are these simple mountaineers, especially so with strangers; but when once the ice has been broken, their reticence vanishes, and a flow of conversation follows. They have trained

their senses of sight and sound with such refined accuracy that very little of what goes on around them really escapes their attention. They know, most likely, every grouse nest on the farm, and can tell you where a covey of partridges can be found at almost any hour of the day.

Highland shepherds and their helpers take a similar interest in the red grouse that nest upon the sheep farms, especially if employed by the proprietor, whose interests they naturally desire to protect. The partridge has many friends besides professed game preservers. Were it otherwise, it would have become extinct ere this in many districts. Sportsmen when shooting over dogs prefer to kill off the leading birds of a covey, if possible, so that the remaining members of the covey become scattered and lose their powers of combination for a while. The theory involved has, no doubt, a large element of truth for its substratum, but it must not be pressed too far. Still it is wonderful how soon the members of a broken covey contrive to reunite and adopt fresh leaders, to whose vigilance and guidance they proceed to entrust their safety. 'In a dead hard winter, the partridge is not put to it as his larger associates are, for the bird naturally is a ground one; all his living is got from it; he lives, broods, and jugs there. No matter how deep the snow may

be, it does not cover up all places completely.' So the bird struggles on in times of hardship, burrowing in the snow and gleaning an existence from many wild seeds. He is somewhat of a dainty feeder upon occasion, relishing the pupæ of ants when obtainable, as well as every variety of the insect host that comes in its way. Slugs and worms, grasshoppers and the grubs of burrowing beetles, flies and other winged creatures vary the diet of the partridge according to the nature of the season and the choice of locality. Besides, it has a liking for young fresh shoots, such as it finds readily enough about the banks of the older hedgerows. So if a covey of birds are not employed in picking the aphides that cluster on the under-surface of the leaves of the turnips, you may hazard a guess that they are botanising on their own account, gathering what John Evelyn calls 'those incomparable sallads of young herbs, taken out of the maws of partridges at a certain season of the year,' which give them a preparation far exceeding all the art of cookery. Later in the summer they levy toll on the ripening berries of wild plants, gather the seeds of the weeds whose presence harasses the farmer: tender green shoots of heather, whortle berries and those of the ground brambles are easily partaken of when their turn comes. The partridge is a careful gleaner, and

grows plump and well favoured during his sojourn on the stubble, though the ringdove eats much of the food which should go to support its more welcome neighbour. But important as the dietary of the partridge must be admitted to be, the bird is no voluptuary, but contrives to make a shift, if occasion arise, without suffering any apparent ills from its misfortunes. It is too spirited a bird to be easily cowed, as we might guess from its self-consciousness and pride of carriage. Indeed birds of both sexes delight to preen their plumage no less than other species in which a striking pattern of colours is apparent. A strong desire of cleanliness characterises most birds. It is all against their will that they shelter thousands of parasites in their downy covering. Either they seek to rid themselves from their tiny tormentors by frequent ablutions, or they cleanse their feathers by dust baths, which appear to answer much the same purpose as actual immersion in water. During the summer months, partridges betake themselves to their feeding grounds at daybreak, and occupy themselves in foraging for food until about 10 a.m., by which time they have usually contrived to satisfy the demands of their appetites. This important condition of things having once been arrived at, the birds seek out some open spot where they can bask in the warm sunshine to their

A SUNNY CORNER

heart's content. They are particular, of course, in their choice of such a *rendezvous*. The sort of place which seems to suit them best, on the whole, is a nice sandy knoll on the side of a hill, screened from inconvenient observation by a light covering of bracken or lady-fern. In such a spot as this the birds are thoroughly at home, and it is delightful to study their sense of enjoyment. Overflowing with exuberance of spirits, they dust their plumage in a sand bath to their heart's content, preening their feathers with grace and skill.

At such a time their attitudes are free and fearless. Some of the number are sure to be seen resting on their sides, thrusting their feet through their wing quills, as if indulging in the luxury of stretching their relaxed limbs, drinking in the warmth, so to speak, with easy contentedness. Country folk in the north of England are well acquainted with this trait, which they express by the word 'balming,' a term which has extended its meaning by common use, so that it has in its turn created the term a '*balm*' to describe a covey of partridges; the designation is informal enough, but it completely meets the case. The situations to which the birds withdraw to enjoy their noonday siesta are generally chosen for their retired position; but the partridge is an adaptive species, and

will take its pleasure where its tastes can best be developed. In quiet country places, for instance, a disused quarry, that has been allowed to become the home of many wild plants, is a likely enough haven for the 'balming' birds, to which the varied character of the ground and its patches of small cover are highly acceptable. The partridge is a bird of resource, and takes his pleasure accordingly. In default of a sequestered nook, he and his fellows occasionally perform their toilette in the light dust that covers the surface of an old turnpike road, shaking the pulverised earth all over their plumage with every manifestation of pleasure.

CHAPTER III

LOVE AND COURTSHIP

THE season of courtship among the field birds possesses an interest for every one who really cares for country life, marking as it does the revival of amatory passions that have remained dormant through the autumn and winter months. The partridge, like the red grouse, begins to pair long before frost and snow have disappeared from the higher grounds; but the former bird is more gregarious than the grouse during the first days of spring; and though its erotic temperament induces it to form attachments that result in the break up of a covey, yet the partridge selects its mate before seceding from the common life. The paired birds do not at once retire from the society of their companions. For a few days or weeks they continue to forage in company, at night they 'jug' together; a trained eye, well versed in detecting the subtle and fine gestures of the birds, takes notice of the attention which the cock birds have begun to

expend upon their chosen partners. A burst of warm weather in February frequently causes the break up of a covey; not that the birds desert their favourite feeding grounds, but that each couple takes up its quarters in some well-remembered haunt, and thence forward shuns the communal life in which it has found satisfaction.

It would be unsafe to dogmatise too nicely as to these or any other idiosyncrasies of the partridge. Indeed, the most carefully considered statements are after all only approximations to the truth, and as fallible as other human judgments. The simple explanation of this is that the movements of the birds vary with the locality, with the aspect of the ground which is preserved, so that hard-and-fast rules are of little service.

Moreover, it must be understood that, even when the partridges in some particular district appear to have settled their love affairs, and to have definitely paired off, a retrograde movement sometimes corrects their ardent desire to enter upon the bliss of their love period. Suppose, for instance, that a sudden spell of summer-like weather bursts upon us in the late days of winter. The mating of the partridges proceeds apace merrily enough. But the clouds gather, and the wind shifts to the north; a heavy

snow-fall soon succeeds the rapidly dispelled sense of warmth and comfort. Once more the partridges unite their forces, and band together for mutual society, and the advantages which they have found by experience are sure to accrue from their discarded intercourse. It would be a mistake to imagine that such a retrograde movement as this '*packing*' together of paired birds appears to be implies that the males have discarded their former appropriation of individual partners. Although they fly and feed together, the individual pairs preserve their liberty of action, and only share the movements of their companions until the arrival of more settled weather invites them to scatter in all directions. March, in spite of its proverbial roar, is pre-eminently the month in which the harsh, raucous call-note of the cock partridge attracts most attention from country folk. Rasping as the effect of the familiar cry certainly is, it possesses a charm peculiarly its own, stirring into life old memories of days spent in tramping the fields, and reviving enthusiasms that might otherwise have continued to slumber for many months. Not the least pleasant feature of the coupling of the partridges is the constant devotion of bird to bird. Their loves are real enough, and they become constant and inseparable companions for the

season, unless some misfortune occurs to one of the pair. In the days when the slaughter of birds that had found their mates and paired off in real earnest was esteemed a trifling fault, a practice prevailed of shooting the cock birds out of the different pairs. Those who practised this method of spring shooting carried their purpose out under a firm impression that it improved their shooting. In all probability they acted prudently enough, strange as their proceeding may seem to us. The explanation is, that in the days of flint-locks, many family parties passed scatheless through a season, and the birds of a brood were apt to seek their mates within the ring of their fellow-nestlings, an undesirable state of affairs. Besides, the proportion of male birds was always high, and barren males that could find no mates were not only useless, but reacted injuriously upon the breeding stock.

The reason for this is not far to seek : few of our field birds are more pugnacious than the partridge. Although devoid of the spurs worn by the representatives of other genera, our home bird is of a jealous disposition, and resents intrusion fiercely enough. The presence of any number of unpaired males on a farm is a source of frequent trouble and disquietude. No harm, therefore, can probably be

done by a decimation of the superabundant sex. The widows are not likely to prove inconsolable. Fresh suitors soon appear to woo the favour of the disconsolate ones, and thus the balance of Nature becomes rightly adjusted. It should be understood, of course, that any such step as that indicated was performed quite early in the season, so early as to anticipate any such misfortunes as those that would follow from the loss of one of a pair of nesting birds. The very earliest broods are not as a rule the most successful, since the weather is often less favourable to the nurture of the tiny chicks in April and the first weeks of May than in the usual hatching season, which is the latter part of June in most parts of England.

Such a dry and genial summer as that of 1893 naturally favours the increase of most varieties of winged game, and of partridges in particular, and helps to atone for the deficiency of a succession of rainy seasons. But the habits of the partridge itself have somewhat altered of late years. Before the introduction of mowing-machines partridges used to nest almost as much in the open fields as quail, so that the sitting bird was liable to be drenched by continuous rains, from which she was screened imperfectly by the low cover in which she nestled. Sometimes the bird fell a victim to the promptings of maternal solicitude,

preferring to perish at her post rather than to desert her precious charges. Many other birds would do the same.

Years ago, when wandering through the picturesque birch woods of the Dee valley, we climbed to a chaffinch nest, only to find the little hen lying dead upon the eggs which she had died to incubate. But the partridge is a bird of stronger attachments than most feathered fowl. The nest itself scarcely deserves the usual title, being, in fact, hardly more than a slight scraping in the surface of the soil, a cavity of no depth, redeemed from absolute bareness by the addition of a few leaves, dead and dry as tinder, and a few stems of withered grass—as unpretentious an affair as could be imagined, but yet amply sufficient after all for the purpose which it has to serve. Many partridges still nestle out in the open fields, but experience plays an important part in the economy of Nature. The frequent destruction of nests in the open meadows has convinced many female partridges of the advantages supplied to nesting birds by the shelter afforded by the briars and brambles that festoon the banks of the older and untrimmed hedgerows. Similarly, an old and bleached root of a tree, to all appearances cumbering the soil uselessly enough, in reality provides a serviceable shelter to a

brooding partridge. Happily the loss of scent which characterises sitting hens saves them from many of their enemies. This is specially true of such birds as choose to nest in close proximity to a well-used foot-path, or beside the stacks in a farmyard. The hen partridge squats very closely to her eggs when incubation has once begun, so closely, indeed, that dogs often pass close to her without detecting her presence.

One partridge, whose nest was discovered by a friend of ours, strangely enough made her home close to a highroad, and in immediate proximity to a stone-heap. This was all the more singular because the task of stone-breaking was carried on day after day, while the partridge sat on unflinchingly upon her treasures. She might easily have found a snug retreat under a neighbouring hedge in thick cover; actually, she preferred the more dangerous spot, and her pluck was rewarded. Unlikely as it seemed that she would rear a brood, this bird brought eighteen chicks safely out of the egg. A bird that nested within fifteen inches of a public footpath which traversed a common on the skirts of one of our large towns was less fortunate. This was due, however, to an accident which her vigilance was powerless to anticipate—indeed, her acuteness hastened the mistake. It was

her constant practice to cover up her eggs with dry leaves before she left the nest to feed. One unlucky day a passer-by strayed a foot or so from the path, and literally put his foot into the nest, breaking a portion of the eggs. Such a mishap is generally fatal to the success of the brood, just as the onset of a dog, which perhaps snatches the tail from the hen, is the inevitable precursor of failure. Even under such disastrous circumstances we have known the cock partridge to take his place upon the nest, after having failed to persuade his partner to resume the performance of her proper duties; but her nerves are generally unequal to the task, and she postpones her energies for a few weeks, until another nest is chosen and duly filled with eggs. The devotion which partridges frequently manifest to their eggs is quite a touching feature of their life history. Take, for example, the conduct of a hen partridge which was found brooding her eggs upon a hedgeside in Perthshire. She was discovered by some young school children, one of whom lifted the old bird off her nest, and carried her home in her apron to her mother's door, exhibiting the captive in childish glee, unconscious of the enormity of her offence. The bird had then been carried a distance of about a mile from her nest, and was at once borne back in

like manner to her treasures and replaced upon her eggs. She showed no alarm, but resumed her motherly duties forthwith, and in due time hatched off a fine covey of tiny partridges. Such instances could easily be multiplied, but the facts are already too well substantiated to stand in any need of repetition on the present occasion.

Much difference of opinion exists as to the boldness or timidity of brooding partridges. Some birds will allow a stranger to step up quietly to their nests for a period of many successive days ; they seem to comprehend that for themselves complete inaction affords the best security. Such is really the case, and very pretty the quiet creatures look as they cower motionless, eyeing the intruder intently enough with their bright bead-like eyes, yet fearful to expose their eggs to danger by any ill-considered or hasty movement.

Some sportsmen think it unlucky to find a partridge's nest. Certainly it is best that the majority of nests should escape attention altogether. The chances of the young birds chipping the eggshells successfully is materially increased by their complete seclusion. The misfortunes which attend the discovery of a nest of eggs are not difficult to understand. If symptoms of human interference exist,

as shown in broken twigs and trampled herbage, the curiosity of stoats and other ground vermin is arrested. Even a field mouse is curious to know why any little change has occurred in his preserves; his peering eyes often discover a dickybird's nest that we had left, we had fancied, in perfect security. The same principle applies to the nests of game-birds, and all the more forcibly by reason of their being constantly placed upon the ground. If a sad mishap has befallen a clutch of eggs, and some of the number have actually come to grief, the misfortune can best be redeemed by such eggs as happen to have escaped destruction being placed under the charge of a domestic fowl. When the little fellows emerge into the world, they soon learn to take care of themselves, but the pupæ of ants are requisite for their successful rearing.

'Two very different kinds of ant-hills supply the eggs or ant-pupæ to the young of game birds, and of partridges in particular. First, there are the common emmet heaps, or ant-hills, which are scattered all over the land; go where you will, you find them. These the birds scratch and break up, picking out the eggs as they fall from the light soil of the heaps; the partridges work them easily. But the ant-eggs proper—I am writing now from the game-preserving

point of view—come from the nests or heaps of the great wood-ants, either the black or the red ants. These are mounds of fir-needles, being, in many instances, as large at the bottom in circumference as a waggon wheel, and from two to three feet in height; even larger where they are very old ones. They are found in fir woods, on the warm, sunny slopes under the trees, as a rule pretty close to the stems of the trees. The partridges and their chicks do not visit these heaps, for they would get bitten to death by the ferocious creatures. The keepers and their lads procure the eggs of these, and a nice job it is. A wood-pick, a sack, and a shovel are the implements required for the work. Round the men's gaiters or trousers leather straps are tightly buckled, to prevent, if possible, the great ants from fixing on them, as they will try to do, like bulldogs when the heaps are harried. The top of the heap is shovelled off, laying open the domestic arrangements of the ant-heap, and showing also the alarmed and furious ants trying to carry off their large eggs to a place of safety; but it is all in vain. Eggs and all they go into the sack. In spite of every precaution, the ant-egg getters do get bitten severely, for the ants would fix anything.'[1]

Pall Mall Magazine.

The young partridges reared by foster-parents become most confiding and animated pets, taking their place, if permitted, amongst the various species which assemble in the yard of the home farm at feeding time. It is far better, however, that the wild birds should be secured from accident, and allowed to rear their young from the first, leading the chicks to the best feeding grounds, and calling them to secure any specially dainty morsels that they have had the luck to disturb and drive out from their hiding-places. The wiles and shifts which partridges adopt in order to divert attention from their broods are well known to the majority of people, and very charming they must be confessed to be.

CHAPTER IV

AS CONCERNING PARTRIDGE-NESTS

THAT May is, in ordinary seasons, the chief month in which our English partridges lay their eggs will be admitted by the majority of people. Yet, strange as the circumstance appears to be, it happens now and again that an old hen bird is shot on the stubble, which proves, upon dissection, to contain a perfectly formed egg, shelled and fully developed, though presumably unfertilised. It would be rash to suggest that eggs of this description are laid in a nest. The probability of their being dropped at random amounts almost to a certainty, and is supported by what we know of the usages of other species. Thus, the sheldrake and the starling frequently drop unfertile eggs—the former upon the salt marshes, the starling upon the garden lawn. The significance of the fact in the case of the partridge is sufficiently obvious. It simply presages a case of early nesting, such as actually occurs from time to time in different parts of the country.

That partridges should deliberately elect to bring forth a brood of delicate chicks in the middle of an English winter sounds improbable enough ; but, after all, it is the exception that proves the rule ; so the very fact that records of partridges incubating during the dead season are so difficult to enumerate, reminds us that there is, normally, a very general uniformity of practice amongst the nesting birds. Certainly the exceptions are surprising enough. No one would dream of looking for a partridge's nest in December, not even in the Isle of Wight or any other warm and favoured situation in the south of England. Yet as recently as the year 1891 a brood of partridge chicks was discovered at Longframlington, in the county of Northumberland, in the middle of January. Their condition was the more remarkable because the weather during which their incubation had been accomplished was particularly broken and inclement. In warm springs young partridges hatch out as early as April and even March ; but such abnormal anticipation of reproduction is irregular, and even rare.

Not the least interesting point in the life history of the partridge is the remarkable fecundity of the female bird. Game-birds are generally prolific in the production of eggs ; indeed, we may accept their free laying as a rule of general application. The principle

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involved is the continuation of the species, which can only be perpetuated at a loss. The reason for this must be looked for in the risks attaching to the rearing of the young birds, which are exposed to the attacks of snakes and ground vermin by reason of their terrestrial habits.

The number of eggs appears, likewise, to vary with the conditions surrounding the reproduction of the young. If the food supply be plentiful, and the weather propitious, the chances of a large number of eggs being laid are naturally enhanced. The partridge is so small a bird that we should hardly expect her to cover more than a dozen eggs in her nest. Sometimes the number falls, we admit, as low as six or seven ; but such small clutches are generally the result of a second laying. On the other hand, we can vouch for such numbers as nineteen and twenty-one eggs being laid and incubated by a single bird. The precision with which every separate egg is packed neatly into its own proper space in the nest is truly marvellous. Sometimes two hen partridges lay in one nest, when their combined contribution has been known to reach a total of thirty-six, not including a pheasant's addition of a single egg—*thirty-one chicks hatched* out of the thirty-seven eggs, thirty of the number being young partridges.

That pheasants and partridges often lay together is known to most sportsmen; sometimes the pheasant hatches out the entire sitting, but this is rare. We believe that in the great majority of those cases in which a pheasant and partridge have laid together, it is the smaller bird that discharges the maternal duties, though not invariably so. The female partridge is, at any rate, the wiser mother, and understands the care of delicate chicks far better than her rival. It does sometimes happen that a domestic fowl which has straggled from a farm-yard joins company with a hen partridge, or, rather, endeavours to oust the wild bird from her claims. Such an arrangement is little in harmony with the jealous temperament of the plucky little partridge, which is pretty certain to evict the newcomer from her home before her domestic affairs have settled down. If the hen has laid several eggs before the birds come to blows, she generally indulges in a free scuffle to maintain her rights. On the other hand, if only one or two eggs have been laid, the hen is less determined in her intrusion, and deserts her post more readily. The hen partridge, left to her own devices, willingly hatches the eggs of the usurper, and cares for the young chickens as tenderly as for her own proper offspring, rearing the bantlings in the fields together with her own young.

We have said nothing, hitherto, of the eggs of the partridge, and, indeed, their delicate olive coloration calls for little description or comment. But this olive coloration is by no means invariable. In rare instances the eggs of the partridge are white, or, in other words, entirely devoid of colouring pigment, a deficiency due, no doubt, to some abnormal suppression of the secretions of the mother at the time that the egg was passing through the oviduct. A really pretty variety is of a uniform pale blue, without any blurring or surface-tracing, affording a graceful contrast to the usual olive ground colour.

When at length the three weeks—during which the development of the chicks is accomplished—have terminated, and the tiny morsels of down chip the interior of their egg-shells, preparatory to emerging into independent life and action, the patience with which the partridge has shielded her treasures from harm is replaced by the fond anxiety with which she and her faithful mate endeavour to provide for the wants of their precocious family. As soon as the chicks have dried their down, and recovered from the helpless sprawling condition to which they are momentarily reduced by the frantic efforts that they have made to release their small bodies from the shivered egg-shells, the old birds lead their nurslings

to safe cover; as, for example, under the shelter of some clumps of furze, that will screen them from observation. The chicks mature rapidly, if the weather is warm and kindly, with plenty of sunshine. Of course, if the weather prove exceedingly hot, the circumstances attending the rearing of the covey become less favourable. On heavy clay soils the earth is liable to contract and split into fissures, which are veritable death-traps for partridge chicks.

Not the least interesting feature of the hatching-out period in the life of the partridge is the courage which it develops in both parents. During the incubation of the eggs the birds only desired to escape attention as far as possible, and to elude the acuteness of prowling fox or thievish crow. But their shyness becomes transformed into audacity if their tender young are jeopardised. The attentions of any interfering biped may be diverted by the pretty strategy that suggests itself to many nesting birds. Even the little blackcap warbler will adopt the time-honoured ruse of simulating the actions of a wounded bird, with a view to draw a stranger away from the shrub that contains its callow family in their simple grassy nest. The earnestness with which a hen blackcap will endeavour to convince her enemy that she has become crippled by some untoward accident

as she flutters in the dust at his feet, is very delightful to observe. Equally touching is the devotion which induces a female shoveller to dash around the enemy, whose presence in the reed thicket in which her newly-hatched ducklings are skulking has disturbed her peace of mind. Gallantly does she risk her own safety for her brood, when her first attempt to wheedle you into the belief that her young are somewhere else has failed to obtain credit. Similarly, if we startle a pair of partridges while engaged in protecting their chicks, we are pretty certain to be entertained with some charming attempt on their part of perpetrating deception upon us. Rising from the tall grass at our approach with startled cry, away they scurry, as if in hot haste. But they do not fly far; no sooner have they traversed a safe distance from their young than they check their course. Alighting in the open field within full view of us, they endeavour to persuade us that they are desperately wounded, and might be captured with a little trouble. Male and female alike trail their plumage through the dusty soil, in their resolution to beguile us with their ingenious devices. Their distress becomes intense if we capture and withhold their youngsters.

But they have more dangerous enemies than man

to contend with. In olden days, the fork-tailed kite used to carry off tiny partridges from their shelter in the young corn, as we have seen the red bird essay to do at the present time in Germany. Even the dainty merlin will, on rare occasions, vary his usual dietary of small birds, by carrying to his downy falcons that lie crouching in the heather a delicate little partridge. Sparrow-hawks and even kestrels have a weakness for young game birds, though the kestrel preys on voles and shrews almost exclusively. Sometimes a pair of carrion crows descend from their outpost in the top of a dead tree to make havoc of a brood of partridges ; a bold defence then becomes necessary to secure their rescue from the maw of the rascally invader.

But even when no danger exists, or at any rate is imminent, the partridge is ready to engage in a fray on trifling provocation. The water-hen is no less gamesome than its aristocratic neighbour, and often exchanges blows with the partridges if thirst induce them to enter its territory. As the summer advances, it is pretty to watch the old partridges foraging with their brood ; the cock bird half runs, half flies, while the female teaches her chicks to thread their way through the long grass or waving corn, daintily picking off the insects that cling to the stems of the plants.

The hen partridge employs a low clucking call-note to attract the attention of her young, which respond to her endearments with a complacent purring sound, pitched so low as to escape the ear of any but the most attentive listener. One brilliant morning in July, an angling friend was returning home from a night's trout-fishing; feeling tired, he sat down behind a rough stone dyke to rest and enjoy the solace of a pipe. Scarcely had he taken up his position, when he heard and recognised the cry of the young partridge. Peering through the interstices of the wall, he saw a pair of partridges and their young taking their pleasure in the adjoining field, which happened to be under clover. Unsuspicious of danger, the half-grown birds were full of play, sparring freely with their fellows as they made their way through the herbage. Early as the hour was, the old cock was quite on the alert. No sooner did he detect a symptom of danger, than he hastened to sound a cluck of alarm, after which he rose upon the wing and flew further afield. The old hen and the young birds disappeared instantly—as if by magic—and were seen no more. Indeed, we have often admired the readiness of resource exhibited by young partridges. Unable to elude pursuit by flight, each individual acts by a common instinct or feeling of

self-preservation ; the acuteness with which they take advantage of the best points of cover is wonderful to recognise.

'Once,' says Mr. Warner, 'in the month of June, the mowers came across a partridge nest in the centre of a clover field. In order to give the old birds every chance of rearing their young, the men left a tuft of herbage round the nest unshorn. The old birds did not desert, but they evidently disliked the exposure of their nest that had taken place. When obliged to go away in search of food, they left together, and on their return would pitch in the field within a few yards of their nest. Having anxiously scanned the view, the hen bird, still true to her love of concealment, crouched close to the ground, and crept quietly back on to her eggs. When these hatched, the young were at once led to a safer retreat.'[1]

[1] *Science Gossip*, 1873, p. 211.

CHAPTER V

PARTRIDGES AS PETS

THERE is a charm about the habits and actions of many of our native birds which renders it pleasant to detain individual specimens in captivity. Some species, it is true, are little suited to bear confinement; either they chafe at the involuntary loss of their liberty, or they retain their natural fear of man, and resist all efforts intended to win their confidence. With the grey partridge it is otherwise. Domesticated partridges are, generally speaking, birds that have been brought up under a domestic hen. This was the case with a covey of nine birds which Mr. James Hutchings reared under a little bantam. The birds grew with great rapidity, and enjoyed a regular supply of insect food. The bantam hen was a kind and watchful foster-mother, and the covey seemed as fond of her and as obedient to her call as if she had been the parent bird. For some three weeks they were confined to a crib and pitched courtyard, but their

owner, finding that the chicks responded well to the clucking of the hen, and would also readily run together to be fed in answer to his own call, they were allowed to enter a garden with their adopted parent. Enjoying a more ample and varied supply of food than would probably have fallen to their share in a wild state, the birds matured beautifully, and were full-grown by the middle of August. About the end of July, the attachment between the hen and her charges began to wane. The partridges exhibited no uneasiness at being separated from the bantam. They continued to obey the call of their owner until the end of August, when they frequently strayed to a greater distance than his voice carried. On these occasions they would visit the neighbouring fields for several hours at a time, but would return with a sudden rush into the courtyard, making two or three excursions into the surrounding country during the day, until the middle of September. At length a day of unusual warmth and beauty came. The morning was hazy, but about ten the sun burst out with unusual splendour, while huge volumes of mist rolled away in silvery grandeur, rising high into the glowing atmosphere. It was then that the partridges, which had been fed at 8 a.m., clustered together, fluttered their wings, made a soft *cluck-cluck-clucking*

sound, and rising on the wing with their characteristic whirr, swept away across the fields and out of sight. The noon came and went, but the birds did not return. Mr. Hutchings instituted an anxious search for them in their favourite fields, but to no purpose.

'I heard,' he writes, 'the reports of guns in a distant field, which awoke me to a full consciousness of the jeopardy of my pets. Three, four, five o'clock came, yet my birds did not. The sun began to cast his beams of golden hue over the tops of the trees in the distant wood, but no sound of my covey assailed my listening ears. A little before sunset my doubts and anxiety grew into something like a certainty that my covey had been half killed and the rest scattered, and the one that made the odd number, whichever that might be, was panting with agony, feeling the torture of a broken leg or wing, or both, dying of unknown quantities of pain under some unsympathising clod, when suddenly a whirring in the air scattered my fears, and in a moment the whole covey swept just over our heads and settled in the courtyard, with a rush and flurry that made us all jump with delight. In a few minutes the whole covey went into their domicile and were made prisoners for life.'[1]

[1] *Field*, Oct. 1, 1881.

Our own experience could furnish other instances in which partridges have proved highly amenable to domestication.

Mr. T. H. Nelson mentions two hand-reared birds which lived in a walled garden, following the gardener about during the performance of his duties, and even allowing strangers to approach within a yard of them. Originally, these birds roosted in the garden; but, after having been alarmed by a cat, they acquired the habit of flying out to roost; returning, however, at daylight to receive their breakfast.

It is not very surprising, after all, that birds reared under a domestic fowl should attach themselves to those who care for them. But even birds that have known the joys of freedom from the time that they chipped the egg-shells as tiny chicks, are susceptible to kindly influences if captured adult. We refer especially to birds that have been taken alive owing to some unwonted circumstance. Thus a pair which Mr. G. Stone saved out of a covey, which had been caught in a town, became very tame when turned into a walled garden, and soon learnt to attend an open window when the hour of feeding them arrived.

Oddly enough, there are well-authenticated instances of partridges voluntarily attaching themselves to the neighbourhood of human beings. Thus, in

January, 1890, during severe weather, a hen partridge found her way into an outlying shed on a Surrey farm where a few fowls were kept, and, making friends with them, shared the food thrown to them daily. The cock bird was too shy to do the same, but was always seen skirting from thirty to forty yards off. The hen bird so completely lost the fear of man as to take food from the hand of the bailiff. When the month of April arrived, and nesting operations became imperative, this hen partridge disappeared with her mate and was thought to have gone for good; but when August came round she reappeared, so no doubt she had had her nest, satisfactorily reared her brood, and deserted them when full-grown. She at once resumed her suspended relations with the poultry, keeping them in rigid discipline, scolding and driving them away if they attempted to interfere with her feeding.[1]

A highly practical use for tame partridges kept in freedom was discovered by the late Mr. Francis Francis, who kept three tame birds on his place near High Wycombe, and found them 'very useful *in keeping a good stock of birds close at home.* They seemed to encourage the other birds to come close round the premises, and coveys constantly jugged in my garden and orchard. I have constantly seen one or two

[1] H.S.C., *Field*, February 7, 1891.

coveys; I once counted twenty-four on my lawn within ten yards of the house. It was a pretty sight. One would see two or three rabbits, one or two perhaps just peeping out of the green shrubs or hopping about the lawn, or perhaps gravely sitting up and prospecting, while the partridges slowly pecked their way onward; now and then one would stop to stretch a wing, or scratch the back of his head with his foot, a curious habit with partridges; then one or two would suddenly crouch down as close as possible to the turf, and others would stretch themselves up to their full height, looking round alarmed; then, a sudden scurry would take place, and away they would all run like racers, into the shrubberies or down into the ha-ha. The rabbits, catching the alarm, would pop into the geraniums or shrubs out of sight. A stray squirrel or two, mayhap, seized also with the panic, would scurry away up out of sight into the tall firs; while half-a-dozen blackbirds and thrushes, which had been industriously occupied with the worms and grubs, would twitter off to some favourite thorn-bush or evergreen until the alarm had subsided. Presently, after ten minutes of quiet, one partridge would run out, then another, and another; then a rabbit would peep out from amongst the tall geraniums, and seeing all secure, would hop out and commence nibbling the

short sweet grass; the whole of the partridges would come back perhaps in detachments; the squirrels would reappear, the thrushes and blackbirds come twit, twitting, out—and a very pretty busy scene ensue, which I have watched for hours. I once produced a perfect furore in the mind of a cockney sporting friend who came to see me, by showing him a score of partridges on the lawn, not a dozen yards from him. Calling him out of bed to see them, he could hardly believe his eyes. Tremendous was his excitement. He wanted to get his gun immediately, and to take a family shot at them out of the window, and felt himself really injured when I informed him that I never allowed a gun to be fired at them on any consideration. I considered it one of the greatest charms of the country life to have them, almost tame, about me, and they seemed quite to understand that they were safe on my premises.'

CHAPTER VI

THE COLOURS OF PARTRIDGES

THE plumage of the partridge varies in shade in different localities. Speaking broadly, birds bred on high, poor land tend to become small in size and grey in colour, while such as are reared in highly farmed districts are often large and highly coloured. The partridge has the forehead, throat, and two sides of the head, chestnut; the upper parts exhibit a harmonious blend of russet brown and grey, varied with dark bars and buff streaks. The rump and upper tail coverts are 'pepper and salt,' set off to great advantage by rich rufous markings. The tail is pure chestnut red, with the exception of the central feathers. The breast is grey, finely barred with black; the abdomen is white, adorned with a blackish chestnut horse-shoe. The distinctions which mark the sexes of this bird have been variously described by authors. Mr. Ogilvie Grant, who has made the study of game birds peculiarly his own, recently devoted

some time to elucidating the plumage of partridges, publishing the results of his labours in the 'Field' of November 21, 1891, from which we quote the substance of his remarks.

Mr. Grant finds that the only trustworthy characteristics by which a male partridge may always be distinguished from a female, except when very young, are the following :

1. In the male, the sides of the neck are brownish grey, or nearly pure slate colour, with fine wavy lines of black ; none of the feathers have pale buff stripes down the shaft. In the female these parts are olive-brown, and almost all the feathers have a pale buff stripe down the shaft, often somewhat dilated or club-shaped towards the extremity, and finely margined with black.

2. In the male, the ground colour of the terminal half of the lesser and medium wing coverts is pale olive-brown, with a chestnut patch on one or both webs, and each feather has a narrow pale buff shaft-stripe, and narrow, wavy transverse black lines. In the female, the ground colour of these parts is mostly black, shading into buff towards the extremity ; each feather has a fairly wide buff shaft-stripe, and is also transversely barred with buff, narrowly edged with black. The buff cross-bars on the wing coverts are

of an unmistakable character, and quite sufficient to distinguish the hen at a glance. The partridge assumes the adult plumage of these parts at the first moult; consequently, the distinctions pointed out by Mr. Grant are strongly marked in the majority of birds before the beginning of the shooting season.

Mr. Grant's researches go to prove, also, that the horse-shoe mark on the breast is found in birds of both sexes, although it is more liable to vary in size in the female than in the male. In the great majority of young female birds examined the horse-shoe mark was well developed, although in some it was represented by a few chestnut spots. In the old female birds the contrary obtains. In the great majority of old hens, the chestnut horse-shoe is represented by a small patch of chestnut mixed with white. Sometimes the chestnut entirely disappears, giving place to a pure white horse-shoe.

Black varieties of the partridge are exceedingly rare. Mr. H. A. Digby records two melanistic examples obtained in 1891 and in 1888 respectively. Of these, the first was of a very dark colour, 'the neck, breast and legs looking exactly as if the bird had been covered with soot, which had been washed off leaving all the light feathers slate-coloured, and the head very dark, the horse-shoe being of the natural

colour.'[1] Reddish varieties are comparatively scarce, but Mr. Borrer once met with a covey of eight, every bird of which was of a light fawn colour. A well-known variety which crops up from time to time in Great Britain is the form which the late Sir W. Jardine designated *Perdix montana*. It occurs plentifully enough in the Vosges Mountains, but has received but little notice in this country.

Writing in the 'Field' of September 30, 1893, Mr. W. B. Tegetmeier records a bird of this variety, which came under his notice in the autumn of 1893. It had been shot on September 25, in the neighbourhood of Stourbridge, out of a covey of partridges of the ordinary colour, from which it was readily distinguished. 'The head and upper part of the neck are of a lighter brown than in the common bird; the lower part o the neck, upper part of the breast, the flanks, the back, and the wing coverts are dark reddish ferruginous brown; the feathers of the upper wing coverts having a central narrow stripe of light brown. There is an entire absence of the slatey grey character of *P. cinerea*. On the sternum the feathers are light buff, each being tipped with two dark brown circular spots, one on each side of the central shaft. The feathers of the legs and vent are buff; the

[1] *Field*, February 7, 1891.

tail had been shot away; the tarsi and feet are pale brownish-yellow.'

In the autumn of 1876, six birds of this variety were shot at Glasshough, near Partsoy, N.B., in the month of October, and fell into the hands of Mr. George Sim, of Aberdeen. Mr. Sim stated that the females, of which there were four, were all alike in plumage, being brown on the breast, while the upper parts are beautifully marked with transverse bars of light brown over a ground colour of drab, the brown being of greater density in some individuals than in others. The males differed markedly from the females, having a preponderance of the rich grouse-like chestnut-brown on the back as well as on the breast.

In the year 1868, the late Mr. Robert Gray saw in the hands of a Dundee bird-stuffer a pair of partridges that had been shot on the higher grounds of Forfarshire a short time previously. They were strikingly handsome birds, and agreed precisely with the partridge figured by Sir William Jardine as *Perdix cinerea*, var. *montana*. The keeper who shot them distinguished them as 'hill partridges,' and Mr. Gray was informed that small numbers of this variety were occasionally seen in the lower grounds, mixing with coveys of the common species. Mr. J. A. Harvie Brown suggested that the variation of the Forfarshire

birds 'had been induced by food, looking at the almost perfect grouse-like colour, especially of the male.'

Mr. J. E. Harting has recorded the occurrence of a similar bird in Northumberland, and others, which must apparently be referred to the same variety, were secured by the late Mr. John Hancock. 'A remarkable feature in the colour of this variety,' wrote Mr. Hancock, 'is the entire absence of the grey ash tint that so agreeably diversifies the neutral colouring of the normal plumage. The whole of the head and neck is of a pale buff or chestnut, similar to that of the front of the head and neck of the ordinary bird; the upper parts are a dark red-brown, each feather having the shaft pale and the extremity with a large spot of obscure white; the upper tail coverts are pale chestnut like the head, with dark brown bands; the tail feathers are of the same chestnut colour, but darker than those of the normal bird; the under-tail coverts are brown clouded with darker colour. The whole of the under parts is of a uniform dark chestnut colour, as if the usual horse-shoe mark had been extended; on the breast in front, where this dark brown meets the pale chestnut or buff on the neck, it is not abruptly defined, but breaks into it irregularly; the thighs are pale obscure buff, and so are the feathers

of the vent.' The description just given was taken from a male specimen. Mr. Hancock adds that 'the dark rich brown colour of these birds suggests at first sight the opinion that they may be hybrids between the partridge and red grouse, but on a more careful examination there is nothing to confirm this.'

Pale buff varieties of the partridge are not very infrequently met with in collections. Birds in which the horse-shoe is pale brown and the body plumage a very pale bluish or stone grey are shot from time to time in England; they have been met with likewise in Ireland. In all the 'blue' partridges that we have personally seen, the chestnut colour of the forehead and throat had been replaced by cream colour.

Pure white and pied partridges have been met with in Great Britain on many occasions. Some of the number have been real albinos, in which the characters of a blanched white dress and red irides occurred together. By far the larger proportion of white birds are examples of *leucotism*, if we may be allowed to employ the phrase long ago brought into use by the late Mr. Edward Blyth to explain the conjunction of pure white plumage and irides of the normal colour. Mr. A. Hasted recorded, in the 'Zoologist' of 1892, the occurrence of two white partridges in a single covey. 'On the wing they both

appeared to be quite white, but on closer inspection the brown markings on the plumage were faintly traceable under the white, the birds having the appearance of having been washed over with a thin coating of white paint. The markings were stronger in the bird shot on October 15 than in that shot on October 3. The legs of both were of a lighter colour than those of the ordinary brown bird, and the eyes were of a bright red colour.' By a curious coincidence, no fewer than *eleven* white partridges were hatched on a property near Croydon in the summer of 1881, five being hatched in one nest, a single bird in another, two in a third, and three in a fourth. Ten of the number were reared to maturity, when nine of them were shot. Mr. P. Crowley examined one of the nine the morning after it had been shot, and found the legs of a dirty straw colour, and the eyes a pale grey-blue with no distinct pupil. An interesting question is suggested, as to how far the characters of albinism or leucotism are liable to become hereditary. Unfortunately, very few albinos or leucotic individuals live long enough to give naturalists an opportunity of investigating the characters transmitted to their descendants. There cannot, however, be the least doubt that heredity plays an important part in these matters, at least so far as passerine birds are concerned ; we believe that

the same is true of other orders. Mr. J. Brodie Innes furnished the following note, which bears upon the point under consideration, to the 'Zoologist':—

'Some years ago, among a brood of common brown partridges on my home-farm, there was one white one. The little bird interested not only me, but my grieve and his children, who took so much interest in it that if they saw the covey go off the farm they used to drive them back; and lest it should be killed or lost, I forbade shooting on the farm. At the proper season it paired with a brown bird, and the result was five white and several brown birds. They were so purely white as to be easily distinguished on the ground from white pigeons by their purity. Again I took care of them. One was killed by a poacher and found its way to a bird-stuffer in Elgin, from whom it was taken by Captain Dunbar Brander, of Seapark, on whose manors it had been poached. I believe he has it still. The other fowl survived the season and paired—two white ones together, and the other two with brown ones. I hoped for a good number the next season, but they all disappeared and there have been none since. I should not have been surprised if they had all gone at once in a covey, for they might have been netted in spite of my keepers; but they were in pairs, and

with growing crops I could not account for it.' Probably, the birds in question were systematically killed off by hawks, their conspicuous colour rendering them peculiarly exposed to their natural enemies.

Partridges with white wing quills, and even with white markings about the head, occasionally come under the observation of sportsmen. Such birds seldom call for much remark, but some pied birds are really interesting. One bird, for instance, killed in Scotland some years ago, had every fifth or sixth feather pure white, so that the bird appeared to be variegated with flakes of snow. We may here remark that exceptionally dark and rich-coloured specimens of the partridge have sometimes been met with, which were considered by sportsmen to be half-bred. The Rev. M. A. Mathew states that he came across such birds, and regarded them as melanistic varieties ; they appeared to be slightly larger than the ordinary bird, and darker than the little dark partridges one is familiar with on the Scotch moors. The late Mr. Stevenson was of opinion that the common partridge did occasionally interbreed with the red-legged species. He assigned to this cross a bird killed in Norfolk in October 1850 ; the feathers on the flanks and wing coverts of this specimen were

decidedly French, as were the legs and part of the head; but the breast, back, tail, and upper part of the head resembled those parts in the English bird. M. Suchetet, who has devoted much time to the investigation of hybrid birds, considers the interbreeding of the red-legged partridge and our bird as being imperfectly verified. Nevertheless, he cites the evidence of Monsieur Duvarnet, a member of the Société d'Acclimatation, who purchased an apparent hybrid of this description from a poultry stall. 'Its beak and legs were red. The feathers of the flanks were those of the red-legged partridge, although rather duller than usual. The wings and the remainder of the feathers of the body were those of the grey partridge, and slightly warmer in tint than usual.' It may be pertinent to add that another member of the Société d'Acclimatation discovered the eggs of the red-legged and common partridges in the same nest, showing that the two species are not as indifferent to one another's society as might be supposed. M. Suchetet is disposed to think that the common partridge has at any rate interbred with *one* of the red-legged partridges, *i.e.* with the rock partridge (*Perdix saxatilis*).

Such a debateable subject as the weight of any game bird would afford food for many opinions in the

gun-room. Our own experience is that thirteen ounces is a fair average weight for young birds in good condition. Mr. Tegetmeier says that twelve ounces is about the usual weight. He has, however, recorded a much heavier bird, a young male, which turned the scales at seventeen ounces. This bird had been killed by Mr. Mann's shooting party in the north-west of Norfolk, and was obtained on September 26.[1]

[1] *Field*, October 7, 1893

CHAPTER VII

POACHING PARTRIDGES

THE netting of partridges appears to the average Englishman to be quite as heinous a crime as it would be voted by any French *baron*; yet there was a time, and that not so very long ago, when any county magnate would have cheerfully lent his presence to the pastime of dragging the fields for these birds. Such a trifling matter as the expense of making a net for taking game was sure to be recorded in the accounts of any ancient house whose head cared for 'sport.' A single entry from the accounts of the Lestranges of Hunstanton may suffice for an example. Among the expenses of 'the Mill, Bachouse, Brewhouse, and Kechyn' for the year 1533–34, an entry stands: 'Itm pd the iij^{d} day of November for ij lb of twyn for the ptriche nett £ *s.* x*d.*' It is clear, therefore, that our forefathers did not content themselves with taking game with their hawks and crossbows, but had recourse to more

destructive measures, such as those that have survived into our own times, and may be perpetuated for many a long day.

Our own views of game-preserving are too strongly coloured with inherited prejudice to admit of our viewing the netting of the birds as a trifling misdemeanour; but while we make the most of our rights as game-preservers, truth compels us to admit that our rights to game were at one time allowed to remain pretty much in abeyance. Before the commons were so generally enclosed, country folk roamed pretty much where they chose in the more remote districts. The fact is that few men possessed serviceable guns, and still fewer of the number could shoot a bird in flight. Any one who made shooting his chief pastime could find plenty of scope for the indulgence of his tastes, as well as for supplying some items of variety to his neighbour's larder. The best shot in a district came to be looked on as one whose skill entitled him to respect, and if he was hail-fellow-well-met, he seldom came across a repulse. Strangers were always regarded with more or less suspicion, especially among the reserved 'statesmen' of the north of England, but they often fared well, even without introductions.

A few years before the death of that good

naturalist, John Hancock, the veteran described to us a visit which he paid to the English Lake district when quite a young man.

Both Mr. Hancock and the friend who accompanied him carried guns, and shot as occasion suggested, without regard to any private rights. No man hindered them. They were as welcome as any one else to try their luck ; no restriction was placed upon their liberty either ; they wandered at their will through the dales and over the hill-sides of Lakeland, choosing their own course as fancy might dictate. And there were gamekeepers in those days. As early as 1767 a gamekeeper resided at Greystoke Castle, and was recognised as a dependent of the house. Doubtless his craft was chiefly devoted to destroying the long-bodied greyhound foxes that came stealing down from their mountain fastnesses to wreak havoc on the tender lambs of Herdwick race. At all events, it was not his business to be over-nice, particularly provided there was a fair show of game in the Howard domains.

Of course when country squires began to turn down pheasants, and even to rear them artificially, the free-and-easy relations that we have just described came to an end, at least as far as the openly avowed pursuit of game by 'Bill the shooter,'

was concerned. It is always hard, however, to unlearn the devices upon which we depended for amusement in youth. What mattered it that prudence warned Bill that it were best to keep on a pleasant footing with 't' squire'? However willing Bill might be in the main to forego his beloved forays, the Old Adam within him must inevitably experience a special hankering after forbidden fruit, and human nature being what it is, a lapse of his good resolution was pretty certain to occur in the long run.

A recent writer has informed us that the old stamp of rural poacher has become well-nigh as extinct as the Dodo itself. In some districts he is seen, we admit, less frequently than formerly. In spite, however, of the spread of education and diffusion of enlightened ideas, we doubt whether the typical poacher is really much scarcer than formerly, in ratio at least to the decreasing population of rural communities. The old dogged type of brutal poacher has, perhaps, become scarce, but his tastes and predilections have been transmitted to his descendants. There are plenty of families who treasure the details of their forefathers' craft and endeavour to reproduce the traditions of those who went before them with all seriousness of purpose.

In the Highlands of Scotland the vast majority

of the population acquiesce willingly enough in the preservation of partridges and other feathered game; although, if the truth were known, we suspect that 'Donald' often finds the temptation to appropriate to his own use the covey of partridges that have been reared upon his croft too strong for human nature to resist successfully. Latterly, a certain section of the pious agitators who have done so much to demoralise the minds of the lower-class Scotch have hit upon the ingenious expedient of claiming that all feathered game belongs to the small tenants of the soil. But, after all, the fault of breaking the tenth commandment lies at the door of some of our most eminent statesmen, and poaching partridges is, in truth, a venial sin compared with the robbing of churches or defrauding owners of property of the legitimate returns of their capital.

We have seldom found the poacher to be a man of much mental cultivation. You would fancy that he possessed a perfect wealth of woodland law, but erroneously. Individual poachers, like our Essex friend, do acquire a marvellously correct knowledge of the habits of all woodland creatures, whether they carry fur or feather, and can interpret to you the cries of every animal to be found within their favourite haunts. But the typical poacher is a

specialist. He cannot afford, he thinks, to waste time and trouble on matters connected only indirectly with his hobbies. If he means business, he ignores the existence of any creatures except those which he plans to capture. His opportunities for obtaining a close acquaintance with natural history in the fields remain all uncultivated. It must not be supposed, however, that his knowledge of his own particular science is superficial. Even if his calculations are sometimes at fault, he is generally more than a match for the average game-watcher; nor does he expose himself to any charge of half-heartedness, but works his wicked will with grim determination. Keepers, on the other hand, though excellent fellows in the main, are usually too much concerned in rearing a big show of game to exercise their thoughts on matters external to their trade.

Mr. Borrer tells an amusing tale of a culprit being haled before a bench of rural magistrates on a charge of having appropriated a partridge's egg. The witness, a gamekeeper, had in his hand a chaffinch's nest, containing several small bird's eggs and a large white one. The chairman told him to hand up the nest to him, and asked which was the partridge's egg. 'The big 'un,' replied the keeper, with contemptuous assurance; on which he was asked whether he could

swear to a partridge's egg when he saw it, and he was very indignant. The chairman, however, taking a pair of scissors from his pocket, deliberately cut open the egg, and, producing a young dabchick, set it upon the desk, observing: 'There's your partridge for you!' to the great amusement of the court and the discomfiture of the keeper. The case was, of course, dismissed, the chairman recommending the witness to learn his business before again practising his profession.

The poacher requires greater shrewdness than the keeper, if he is to exercise his vocation with profit as well as with impunity. It is his business, first and foremost, to net or snare the partridges or other game that he requires for the market. Success can only be obtained by close attention to business. An amateur would be sure to exercise his ingenuity to little purpose. Even the bird-catchers who drag the downs of the South Coast with ground-nets for larks incidentally secure a few partridges in the meshes of their old-fashioned fowling engines. A scientific poacher leaves as little as possible to chance. He scorns the idea of shunning danger, being willing and ready to run certain hazards in carrying out his schemes. Before he enters upon any serious operation, he selects his ground and makes himself master

of all the short cuts. He knows, too, all the obstacles that might impede a hasty flight. Sometimes he turns his attention to farm lands bordering on large towns; more often he journeys further afield, making mental notes of a practical character as a preparation to the initiation of a fresh campaign. His arrangements are often brought to a head in the parlour of some innocent-looking public-house. The tastes of the proprietor probably include a weakness for sport in the abstract, and he acquiesces sympathetically in the eccentricities of his patrons. Nor is this altogether surprising, if we consider that a plump hare or a brace of young partridges would form an acceptable addition to his Sunday dinner. Indeed, we strongly suspect that in his early days our host himself occasionally figured in transactions of a dubious kind. A hint of this may be found in the homely construction of the walking-stick gun which hangs from the oaken beam in the kitchen; while, if further proof be needed, the adroitness with which our landlord takes the weapon to pieces, and stows it in his capacious pockets, argues something more than a chance acquaintance with its mechanism.

The task of marking down coveys of partridges is often facilitated by a hint from some local worthy who has a grudge to pay off against a discarded

employer. But the artist does most of his own scouting, smoking a short clay pipe under the shelter of green lanes without incurring a shadow of suspicion. The presence of a stranger in any quiet neighbourhood is apt to excite attention, it is true; but our friend has no desire to court publicity: on the contrary, he usually errs on the side of modesty, or, if challenged, is ready with an ingenious tale which more than accounts for his presence. In reality, his best attention is devoted to ascertaining the precise haunts of the different coveys, with a view to economising labour and reducing the risk of possible discovery. It wouldn't answer his purpose to go out netting partridges unless he knew precisely the corner of the field in which a covey of partridges were sure to 'jug' for the night. Their movements are learnt partly by observation, partly by the harsh call-note of the leader of the covey, since his authority is supreme.

Another consideration which enters into the calculations of the poacher is the device of studding the surface of fields with stakes. A delicate net would soon be rendered useless if it came into contact with a quantity of briars. The poacher operates in such a manner as to reduce the risks of failure to a minimum. His engine is a light net generally measuring about

thirty yards in length and ten in depth. Such is the average size. A more deadly engine is forty yards long and measures in depth twelve yards. In either case it is made with a two-inch-square mesh. The material of which the net is constructed varies with the nature of the ground. Where the land is much bushed, the net in general use is made of strong pack-thread, but a favourite material is silk. The latter is of course more expensive than pack-thread, but it is lighter and stronger. It has also a special advantage, that it occupies less space than the thread net, and can be wound round the body without awakening any unkind suspicions. In either case a heavy cord is attached to the bottom of the net to keep it on the ground. Some men attach pieces of lead to the bottom of the net when purposing to drag any rough land: this expedient is most often put into practice when stubble fields are the scenes of operation. A cord is fastened to each end of the net, which must be worked by at least two persons; a third assistant often facilitates the labours of the two principals. As a rule poachers choose grass and clover fields for their nocturnal incursions, especially if the ground is broken and somewhat undulating.

Partridges prefer to roost on gentle elevations. It might be supposed that the finer the night the better

the sport would be; but such is not the case in actual fact. The rougher the night, the more favourable are the chances, both of success in securing a large bag, and of eluding the attention of any curious observer.

Innocence marks the poacher's line of policy. If surprised during the hours of daylight in a compromising position, the real professional knows his cue only too well; he was looking for ferns, or gathering a few blackberries to take to the missis, and meets any awkward enquiries with the composure of injured innocence. When actually operating, the poacher is on his mettle, and must on no account bungle his business. If the night is stormy, the birds are pretty sure to lie close. In any case extreme caution is indispensable to success. Many poachers deaden the sound of their footfall by pulling a pair of old stockings over their boots. Their knowledge of the probable location of each covey enables them to go direct to their usual roost. If stakes are likely to hinder operations they are rooted up, to be replaced after the programme of the evening has been completed. It has been explained to us that the delicate attention implied in the replanting of the bushes temporarily removed is a tacit acknowledgment of the rights of property. It has the further merit of allaying unneces-

sary suspicion, so that in the event of an operation proving unsuccessful it may be repeated.

When the game is over and the birds have been stowed away in a bag, great caution is still necessary, as it is quite impossible to say when or where a member of the county constabulary may appear in evidence. Extreme prudence is second nature to a professional poacher. He is never in a hurry to dispose of the spoil. Often the results of a successful evening are stowed away in some thick cover, where nobody would think of looking for them, and the poacher returns home empty-handed, looking the very embodiment of innocence. The ruses by which poachers evade detection are legionary. Sometimes one of the gang walks on in front of his mates, unhampered by any compromising impedimenta. Should any suspicious circumstances intervene, the poacher whistles the call-note of a golden plover, or some other wild bird ; if that hint fails he strikes a fusee, nominally to light his pipe, but in reality as a secret signal to his companions.

Assuming that the operations of an evening have met with successful issue, the fraternity have still to dispose of their booty. This is effected by an arrangement with a game-dealer at a distance, or through the agency of some local carrier ; the latter

gentlemen are responsible for the freightage of a variety of goods. It may not be inappropriate to instance here a recent experience, albeit not concerned with partridges. A fellside farmer captured a raven in a trap set for a mountain fox. The man of flocks seized the bird and struck its head against a stone. The lifeless body was then rolled up in brown paper and committed to the charge of an itinerant carrier who chanced to call that day. The parcel was duly delivered at the birdstuffer's. When the package was opened, out hopped Mr. Raven, who, having recovered from a momentary swoon, flew on to the kitchen table and proclaimed his return to the upper world with a harsh unmusical croak.

Carriers of the Barkis type are nothing loth to earn an extra shilling by the porterage of parcels which, if examined officially, might not unfairly be deemed contraband. They are in touch with local shopkeepers and willingly act as middlemen. But if the poacher has arranged a contract with a game-dealer like-minded to himself, the *modus operandi* is enormously facilitated. The game-dealer is happy to supply his agents with his own printed labels conveying the terms of his licence to deal in game. All that is necessary, under such circumstances, is for the

poacher to carry a sack of partridges to a strange station, and there to book the goods to the dealer, attaching the printed labels of a licensed dealer in game as the most effectual means of allaying inconvenient suspicion. Sometimes the birds are packed in soap-boxes and consigned to some small general dealer. Others call in the assistance of their womankind, who carry the birds 'to wash' in baskets of foul linen, or stow them in the trunk of the 'servant girl,' who is going out to a 'new place.'

A more open method of securing the sale of poached partridges is to impress the co-operation of some individual who himself shoots a few acres, and takes out a gun licence to serve as a blind which may cover other irregularities. Such a man does not hesitate to add a score or two of netted partridges to the single brace which honestly fell to his own gun the previous day. Some game-dealers have a private entrance for early visitors, approached by some more or less circuitous route on the plea of feeding the pigs or filling a bucket with spring water. If the normal means of despatching game are suspended, recourse must be had to itinerant hawkers, many of whom are adroit enough at bartering away poached game in the prosecution of their ordinary traffic.

The trade in live partridges has received consider-

able stimulus from those who purchase large quantities of partridges for turning down upon their private estates. Such birds are professedly of foreign origin, but a large percentage are supplied by the home counties of England.

Before we take final leave of this subject, it may be remarked that there are other methods of poaching partridges besides netting; notably, snares are employed for taking partridges, especially when snow is lying on the ground, and the birds are hungrily seeking food nearer the homesteads than is ordinarily the case. Farm labourers are the chief culprits in this respect. Snares are so easily set during the performance of other duties that they often escape the notice of keepers and landowners, and prove highly remunerative to those who use them. In the North of England especially, the country folk have a happy knack of making snares.

When the sand grouse visited England in 1888, a country hind volunteered to snare a whole flock of these beautiful species upon the ground on which they were accustomed to roost, and, if permitted, would certainly have carried his suggestion to a successful issue. Such a fate actually befell a whole covey of partridges, which had had the misfortune to alight within the precincts of a county prison; it

was in the old days, when local gaols were managed by the magistrates, and the officials enjoyed greater freedom of action than would be tolerated nowadays. The governor of that prison had a weakness for partridges. One of his charges was similarly affected. Accordingly the governor ordered the wily old poacher to proceed to set snares for the birds. That worthy was nothing loth to exercise his favourite trade; and between the two, the whole covey of birds was successfully trapped.

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SHOOTING THE PARTRIDGE

BY

A. J. STUART-WORTLEY

A. J. Stuart-Worley

'OVER THE CORNER'

CHAPTER I

'ARMA VIRUMQUE CANO'

A DIFFICULTY in the way of writing about the partridge is the question: To whom shall I appeal? 'To the public,' I am told, but here I am doubtful, for the public knows nothing of partridges, excepting towards Christmas-time the price per brace. In my Oxford days, 'Student Williams' was a Fellow of Merton, when Randolph Churchill and I were undergraduates there—a very brilliant and characteristic specimen of the Don of that day, whose literary and classical ability forced from his seniors a measure of the popularity which his wit and liberality of opinion readily secured for him from the younger men. Afterwards one of the most fluent and versatile of the well-known band of writers who have made the variety of the articles in 'The Daily Telegraph' so famous, he was one day, being in town on August 31, asked by his editor to write an article to appear the next day on the 1st of September and partridges.

'Good heavens!' said the Student, 'I never *saw* a partridge, except on a dish!' Poor Student, he was more familiar with lamplight than with stubbles, and a better judge of the balance of a decanter than of a breech-loader. But the article did very well; the public, no doubt, were perfectly pleased—and this makes me uneasy when I think of it, for I wonder whether the superior ability of Student Williams, combined with his ignorance of the partridge, would not make more readable matter than I am likely to produce.

All that can be said in the practical form of hints, facts and experiences has been so admirably done by my friends, Lord Walsingham, Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, and Mr. Grimble, that I can only hope to interest by sticking to the actual facts that have come under my own observation, and the deductions which may fairly be drawn from them.

Here at the outset I come upon a word on which I must found my first hint to those who wish to excel in shooting the partridge, or, for the matter of that, any other bird.

Observation.—Partridges will behave in much the same manner, under the same circumstances, in all localities, and a man should know when beating a field whereabouts the birds are likely to rise, or, when

sent to his place for a drive, the part of the fence in front of him where he is likely to get most of his chances. This quality has often been called instinct, but this is a mistake; it is the quality of observation highly developed and coupled with a faithful memory. If it were instinct we should know where to look for the game the first time we are taken out; but we do not, and it is really the varied, but always accurate, recollection of former observations that produces the apparently spontaneous knowledge of the sport which distinguishes some men. How often when beating a field of turnips the way of the drills, in the company of a duffer, have you seen him half-cock and shoulder his gun as he got to within about ten yards of the end fence! Up gets a bird from under the last two or three turnips, and is over the fence and away before he is ready. You perhaps kill it for him, and his only reflection will be: What a wonderful fellow you are to know there was likely to be a bird in that particular corner! But he will make the same mistake the next day, and for ever, because he observes nothing, and consequently doesn't know that an odd bird, who has been running up the drills from you since you entered the field, is often too nervous to rise until forced to do so at the very end, and is also afraid to cross by running the small space

which intervenes between the turnips and the fence. I dwell upon this instance because therein lies all the real foundation of the superiority of a good man out shooting over a bad one. It accounts for the proverbial good-luck of really first-rate men in driving, as well as in walking up. The good man appears to get more chances, because as the ground develops in front of, or around him, he sees at once where he is likely to get a shot, and when it comes he is ready for it. He is safer to shoot with, for his faculty of observation and memory combined make him aware of places where the rise or fall of the ground has accounted for dangerous shots being fired, and in such places he will only fire within certain limits. To a beginner I would recommend the happy practice of going over again in his mind all the incidents of the day, field by field, and shot by shot, when he goes to bed, trying to remember how and where every brace of birds was killed, how many were lost, and where. I used to do this regularly, and sometimes do still, and I know no pleasanter way of courting the sleep which the wearied hunter must enjoy to the full in order to be fit for the next day's work.

As I do not know whether I shall be addressing myself chiefly to the novice in the sport of partridge-shooting or to the practised shot, I shall just set

down what I pretty well know, as we painters say, 'from nature,' and what I do not know shall say nothing about, and possibly my reader, if he be a member of 'the public,' may never discover my ignorance. Talking of the public, I have never yet been able to discover who the public are. I think in this country there is a public for everything. I know there is one for partridge-shooting, just as I am convinced there is one for organ-grinding, and just as I belong to the one, so I am very sure I do not belong to the other. Then, again, the shooting public, to whom I am advised to appeal, is much divided. There are, and always were since I can recollect, the two classes of men to whom shooting is a pleasure, but who look at it from very different points of view; although with each the pursuit of game is a ruling passion. They have only that instinct in common. One man, whom I will call A., is the accomplished driving shot, the *fin de siècle* exponent of the modern art of gunnery, or of the management of an important beat, shooting very brilliantly, and though luxurious by habit, probably no *fainéant* at other vigorous sports and pastimes. He is armed with the most beautiful pair of guns, his cartridges are loaded with the utmost care and the best of powder, and he has a well-trained servant to load for him.

The other man, called B., has not had the same opportunities, and cannot afford the same perfection of turnout. He is probably a poorer man—he is, so to speak, a provincial, and neither by social position nor residence enjoys the chance of shooting where game is very plentiful and organisation very perfect. But, on the other hand, he is probably country-bred, often, though not always, a good sportsman, a keen judge of a dog or a horse, a bit of a naturalist, a good walker, and sometimes a really good shot. His weapon—he has but one—is possibly an old pin-fire, a fairly-made, but badly-balanced, gun by a local maker, with hammers, but without ejectors, of which the most that can be said is that it will probably kill a bird at all ordinary ranges if you can hold it straight. His cartridges are not of brass, nor even green cases; they may be very good or very bad, according to circumstances; and he has no servant to load for him, but likely enough a handy man who knows something of petty sessions, pantries, and partridges, and who is an infallible marker.

Now how can you bring A. and B. together on the subject of partridge-shooting? The only answer is, Why should you try? I will only try so far as to urge that neither should despise nor dislike the other. Depend upon it, they both know a good deal

about game and shooting. I have known many A.'s and many B.'s, have learnt much from both, and I never could see why A. should undervalue or disbelieve in the undoubted qualities of B., calling him pot-hunter, poacher, or 'unsophisticated native gunner,' nor why on earth B. should be so fond of writing to the 'Field' to abuse and ridicule A., denouncing him as effeminate, cruel, and ignorant of natural history or sport, and darkly hinting at his life of vice and dissipation, while denying him the energy to pursue it; abusing the drives he has never taken part in, and the shooters he has never met, and making himself ridiculous and offensive on a subject which should be a bond of brotherhood between all classes of Englishmen. When the Marquis of Carabas (very wisely) invites B. to take part in the slaying of 200 brace of partridges or 1,000 pheasants in one day, I have never known B. to refuse to shoot with him or to meet his enemy A. If A. has had too much whisky and soda and rubicon besique the night before, he will get his eye wiped by B. at some of the high pheasants over the valley; and if Lord Carabas is in doubt how to get that big lot of birds back from the boundary fields and how to realise them, he is likely to get as good an opinion from B. as from A. But when the birds *have* been brought back, and over the guns, A.

will give B. a very pretty lesson in the art of shooting, and B. will find to his astonishment that A. and his servant are fully aware of and well able to retrieve all wounded or towered birds that have dropped some distance behind the line, birds which B. thought his town-bred rival would never have noticed. But they are both good fellows: the provincial can learn much from the metropolitan sportsman, and *vice versâ*. If B. is asked often enough by the Marquis of Carabas to shoot the big wood, and by his neighbour, Lord Turniptop, to drive partridges, he will imperceptibly assimilate much of the nature of A., and as his ideas widen and his circumstances improve, he will be found eventually with a pair of really good London guns, and may one day be able to kill three birds out of a covey as they come over him. And it does not surprise me when I come across a man of the A. type, who in a wild country, where game is scarce, proves himself as keen and as able to secure ten brace of birds under difficult circumstances as any man of the other type. The grammar of the business he probably learned in early life, and has the unerring memory and faculty of observation spoken of just now. Accurate shooting, a natural gift, he has perfected by long practice and in divers places, and all these things make him very difficult to compete

against. The Maharajah Dhuleep Singh very seldom went out for less than 100 brace of birds to his own gun, and was a typical exponent of the big shoot system. But I don't think I ever met any one who knew more thoroughly the habits and natural history of all game, whilst of the partridge, from the day of his hatching to the day of his being roasted and eaten, there was nothing he did not know. The same may be said of most of the really first-rate shots, at any rate, of my generation. I hope the young generation are equally well posted, but confess I am not so sure of it.

The local gunner has sometimes a great reputation as a shot. Equally it is sometimes well deserved, but generally qualified by his description as a 'partridge shot,' 'snipe shot,' or 'rabbit shot.' If he be a naturally first-class shot indeed, he will be able to shoot anything. I remember a story of one of the most consummate shots of the day, who, being on a visit to Ireland, was pitted against the local celebrity, described, of course, as the best snipe shot in all Ireland. So he may have been; but when the day of the friendly contest came, he went home at lunch-time. The English crack was too good for him, and the disappointment of his friends was like the sadness of heart that beats upon the Town Moor at Doncaster when the best horse in Yorkshire is defeated by the

Derby winner. Again, a very excellent trap-pigeon shot may shoot very poorly at game, but a very excellent game shot can always become a fine trap shot. The greater includes the less. Partridge-shooting, if we take driving and walking together, is an acknowledged test. There is no class of shot which the partridge does not afford at some time or other, with the exception of the twisting in the first few yards of flight peculiar to the snipe, ability to succeed in defeating which is the only excuse for placing a man who is peculiarly good at snipe in a class by himself. If you shoot partridges, walked up or driven, really well, you can shoot anything. The low skim of the grouse over the heather may surprise you the first time you see it, but will not trouble you, for you are quite used to the sort of difficulties it presents if you have stood up to a low fence to kill partridges being pushed up wind. The rocketing pheasant will but remind you of the way the covey comes over a high belt, and even a teal coming down wind, perhaps the fastest thing on earth, will not beat by much the December partridge under the same conditions, either in pace or power of swerving in his flight.

CHAPTER II

'TOUJOURS PERDRIX'—FORM GOOD AND BAD

How well each one of us remembers his first partridge! I well remember mine. It was not the bird I aimed at; I had been out many days without striking a single bird with even an outside shot. I am afraid I at last got to shoot vaguely at the covey like Mr. Tupman—though not like him with my eyes shut; and when this bird was finally retrieved—he was a strong runner—I felt more of shame than of pride. I learnt under old Hirst, the keeper at Hawarden Castle, my first season, in the days of the kindly and accomplished Sir Stephen Glynne, and, therefore, before his brother-in-law, the great Mr. Gladstone, succeeded to the property. Very kind to me they both were, and whatever great questions of State may have possessed Mr. Gladstone's time and brain at this period, for I confess I do not remember, he always had a genial word or two, and an enquiry how the sport fared when I came in at night. Old Hirst

was a very fine shot, one of the best I ever saw, and perfectly wrapped up in it. Nobody shot over the estate but him and his sons, and I verily believe that all he knew of Mr. Gladstone was that he had once been a shooter and had lost a finger through the accidental discharge of the second barrel while loading a muzzle-loader. He always promised my father that he would send me home if I fired a dangerous shot, and he kept his word. Well do I recollect the humiliated frame of mind in which I loitered home about 3 P.M., having killed nothing myself all day, and had my gun taken away from me for nearly shooting Hirst junior. Did I go straight in and confess? No, I did not; I crept through the park, loafing and lying about out of sight under the great trees which Mr. Gladstone and his axe have since made so famous, and the incident blew over. I never heard any more of it. But it did me a world of good, and many a time since when I have seen the inevitable duffer plugging at low pheasants, and heard the offensive rattle of misdirected shot in the twigs about me, have I wished that the shooter were under discipline, and that I were old Hirst and could send him home.

Hirst backed himself on one occasion to hit 495 penny pieces out of 500 thrown up. He won his bet,

hitting 498, and proud he was to show you the cutting out of the local newspaper which reported it. A really remarkable performance, especially considering that it was years before glass-ball shooting or Dr. Carver was ever heard of. Hirst only died a year or two ago. He must have been a great age, and I am told that to the last he used to talk of how he taught me to shoot. I am sorry he did not live long enough for me to have sent him this book, to show that the pupil did not forget his first master.

I have often been asked whether pigeon-shooting from traps is likely to improve a man's game-shooting. My answer is, Undoubtedly, just as I am sure, and have proved to myself, that practice at the running-deer target is good for deer-stalking. In both cases the standard of accuracy necessary for a first-rate performance is forced upon you; and one of the most common drawbacks to the average or moderate shooter is that he has no standard of accuracy. He does not know what ought to be done, still less what can be done, with a gun or rifle. If he brings down a pheasant or partridge, he is content; whereas broken limbs, and a mass of tail feathers, or a strong running bird, distress the first-rate man so greatly that he would almost as soon have missed altogether. The latter knows the bird was not in the centre of the

shot, and unless a bird at easy distance is hit in the head or neck, or at least well on the forward part of the body, it affords the professor no satisfaction whatever. Here are two diagrams representing what I mean, and it will be observed that, although the bird in fig. 1 would undoubtedly come down and look as though fairly hit to the average observer, it is really not at all a good shot. Fig. 2 shows the same bird struck as it should be, the centre of the charge being a little in advance of the bird's beak.

It is just possible to miss birds altogether in trying for the result shown in fig. 2, but my impression is that this is rare, and only occurs with first-rate shots when the birds are very close, and they are trying to kill without mashing them. But it is better to miss quantities in this way than to get into the habit—for it *is* a habit, even with some very good shots—of shooting just six inches too far back. *Forward and high* must be the shooter's motto; if he ever shoots over or in front of a bird, and can be certain of the fact, let him take careful note of it—he will not do it often. I well remember being sent to stand in a gale of wind for ducks and teal disturbed from a long distance and coming down wind. The first lot that came over me, wide and high to the right, were five big ducks. The pace was terrific. I laid on what

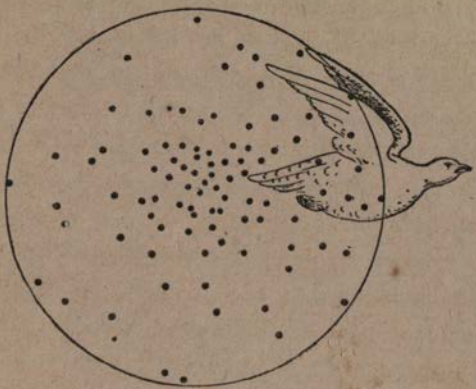

FIG 1

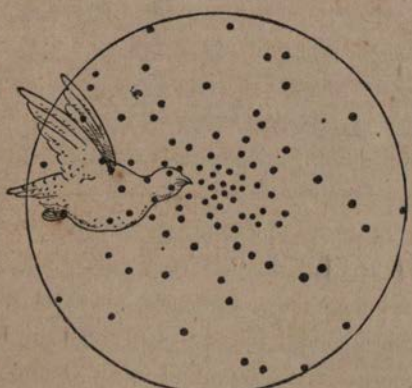

FIG. 2

looked like the length of a church in front of the first one; I killed the last of the five as dead as a stone. There must have been quite four yards between the tip of the first duck's beak and that of the last, which, added to the church's length, shows what immense allowance must be made in certain cases for cross-shots in a wind.

Talking of allowance, I remember, when engaged in a discussion with Lord de Grey and others at the running-deer range at Wimbledon on the 'throw-up' of some particular rifle, we were attacked and chaffed by the present Lord Dunsany, then John Plunkett. He chuckled greatly, as he stood up to shoot, at the difference of opinion between de Grey and myself. 'But,' I said, 'we agree as to elevation; we only differ as to the amount of allowance.' 'Just like me and my father,' said Plunkett, as he pulled trigger.

This question of allowance is rightly said in the Badminton Library[1] to be governed by instinct, but the habit of never dreaming it possible to shoot straight *at* the body of the bird, unless coming direct to you or going direct away, and on the *level of the eye*, can be acquired by any one, and practice will enable you to a considerable extent to judge how much in front or over to shoot. Speaking generally,

[1] *Shooting*, vol. i. p. 40.

you must shoot a little over everything, excepting, of course, at a bird which is going away, having passed over your head. In this case you must shoot under it, but very little. All these matters are easily arrived at on paper by a moderate knowledge of perspective, a subject which, I have often thought, could be studied with advantage up to a certain point by those who are very keen to excel in shooting.

I have tried to illustrate my meaning in a simple form by the following diagrams :—

Fig. 3 shows at a glance the necessity for shooting over every bird coming to you, except in the case of

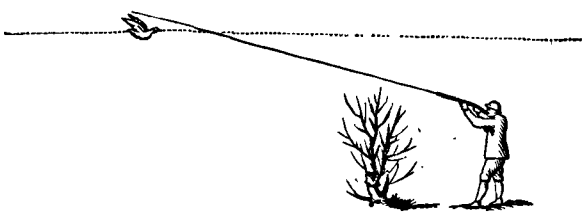

FIG. 3

fig. 5, when the bird is approaching on the exact level of the eye and keeping a level course, which, being prolonged, would pass through the head of the shooter.

Fig. 4 shows the allowance underneath a bird which has passed over your head.

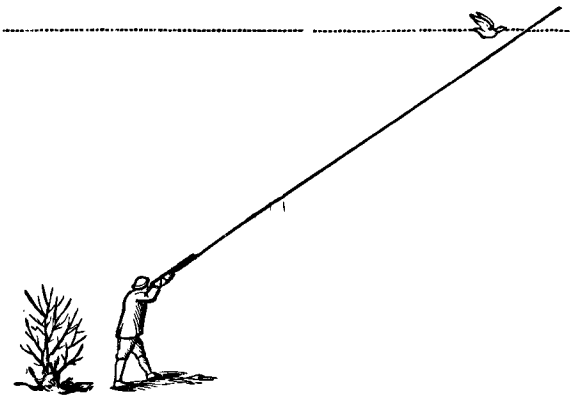

FIG. 4

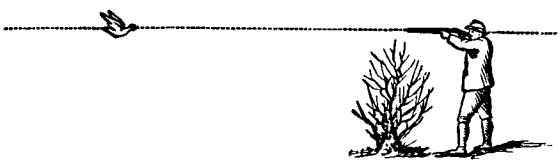

FIG. 5

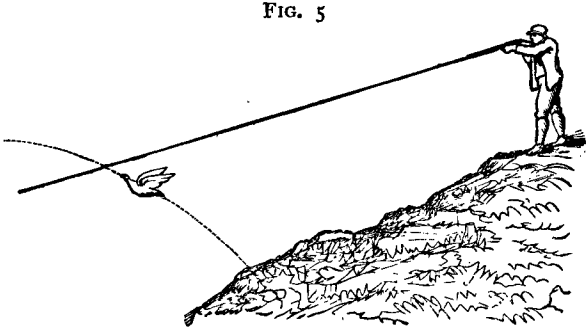

FIG. 6

Fig. 6 shows the necessity for shooting over a bird which rises in front of you [1] and makes straight away.

Fig. 7 shows the necessity for shooting well over a bird rising off the hill underneath you.

All this is no doubt very elementary, and would be matter of instinct to a first-rate shot; but it has not, so far as I am aware, been shown on paper in

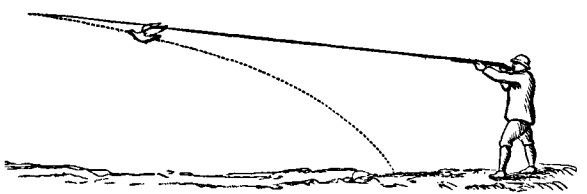

FIG. 7.

this form before. The very few lines of these drawings demonstrate, I hope with simplicity, that the only instance in which you have to shoot *at* the bird itself is when, as in fig. 5, it is heading straight for the muzzle of your gun. The habit of making some allowance for where the bird is going to may probably be acquired, though the *amount* of allowance,

[1] It might happen that a bird, having risen in front of you, flying away, had before you fired risen to the level of your eye, and was then pursuing a level course; but this would be very exceptional. In this case you would shoot *at* the bird, as in fig. 5.

considering pace, wind, &c., will remain a matter of natural gift. I believe the root of a great deal of bad shooting is to be found here; a trick or habit of aiming *at* the bird. This, in the case of a moving object, obviously can never be right, excepting in the occasional instances here stated.

Now the difference in result when a first-rate exponent is at work is simply enormous. It is wonderful to look at; and there is nothing prettier to watch than how each bird falls, crumpled up by the centre of the charge, exactly at the moment you involuntarily expect it, and looking as though it received a deliberate box on the ear, knocking it completely out of time. There is no appearance of haste or hurry, and though the performance looks, as I say, deliberate, you would be astonished to find how really rapid it is, and how much oftener the professor gets his gun off in a given time than the average man.

A great deal of this effective result is due to the habit or science of shooting forward of the bird by calculation. The calculation is rapid, and, I think, instinctive; but it is there, just as it is with a man fielding a ball or running for a catch at cricket. He doesn't run or stretch out his hand to where the ball *is* at the moment of seeing it, but to the spot where it will meet his hand; and so it should be with the

shooter. I have seen in print some absurd suggestions, that you should aim on the bird and then toss the gun forward to where you think your shot should meet him; but this is manifestly a bad system for every reason. It really involves two aims, and when birds are flying fast it is all anybody can do to throw quick enough in front, while the 'toss' never can be accurate. In the case of a bird coming quite straight and directly over your head, you may do it with advantage, since the gun, when put up to the spot you mean to arrive at, will blot out the body of the approaching bird, and it is necessary to point for a fraction of a second at his beak to keep your line of aim true. But if he is coming in the slightest possible curve or aslant, it becomes fatal at once.

One cannot, therefore, exaggerate the importance from the first of shooting on the plan that there is a spot in the air where your shot must strike the bird, and that you must raise your gun directly to align that spot. A delightful phrase to illustrate the result of the opposite system was heard by a friend of mine, addressed by a Norfolk keeper to a shooter who was for some reason or another missing clean an extraordinary number of shots at partridges. 'Why, sir, yew don't fare[1] to see the birds this moarnin'; yew

[1] Seem.

fare to shute whar the' hev' bin.' And you will surely shoot where they have been if you aim *at* them.

One thing that makes partridges very difficult is that they never, or hardly ever, come at you or go away from you in a straight line. The line is almost always a curve, and sometimes a very sharp one. When you add to this the variations of pace and light, and the necessity for shooting over, it becomes obvious that the calculation is too complicated to be made at the moment of firing, and must therefore be instinctive. But I am convinced that men who are beginning to shoot can improve themselves greatly by following the principle of calculation, that is, by treating the bird as an object that has to be, so to speak, cut off or intercepted at a certain spot, and not as an object to be aimed at.

The first-rate man will astonish you much by the amazing long shots he will kill, aye, and kill stone dead, and that very often. Forty yards (usually described as fifty or even sixty) is a long shot, but when your gun makes a good plate at forty yards there is very little chance in favour of the bird. Our friend acquires this, one of the most beautiful things to see in good shooting, by his invariable practice of allowing a good distance in front of the bird. It is the same system at long shots as that

which leads him to strike them in the head and neck at closer distances. Referring again to my diagrams on pages 101–103, you will see that, taking the length of a partridge in profile (as in a cross shot) to be a foot, the shot in fig. 1 is about fifteen inches too far back, although it kills the bird, and the moderate shooter would be consequently quite satisfied. But there is such a thing as the angle of deviation, and fifteen inches out at twenty yards becomes thirty inches out at forty yards, which places your bird outside the possibility of being struck at all. We see at once by this of what immense value is the habit or practice of treating the tip of the bird's beak, in close shots, as the point to be arrived at. To increase the allowance proportionately when the bird is farther off follows instinctively upon this habit at closer quarters; but the man who cannot or will not do the one will never do the other, and will to the last day of his life, when he sees the first-rate man kill long shot after long shot, believe that the latter has a stronger shooting gun or a heavier charge than he has. I know one or two men who are so conscious of their inability to kill anything beyond thirty-five yards that they will not fire beyond that range; and I admire them for it, for they would only waste cartridges and occasionally wound birds.

As a matter of fact, the inferior performer does not wound much in shooting long shots; for if, as we have been showing, he is inaccurate at short distance, he will be often many feet out at the farther range. Probably the distance by which birds flying very fast at long ranges are missed often amounts to as many yards as it is popularly supposed to be feet. But a really good shot should be chary of firing at game beyond the real killing distance; for, as he is seldom much off the mark, he will strike nearly every bird with an outside corn or two. I have always seen a much heavier pick-up on the following day when the guns have been very good, and there can be no doubt this is the reason. It is odd that the contrary is usually supposed to be the case, but I think all those who have been used to shooting in first-class company will corroborate my view, although, as a matter of humanity, it may tell against themselves.

I must recur again to the value of pigeon-shooting from traps in competition with others as fine practice for game. You have to maintain a very high average of kills even to pay your expenses, and the rivalry, as well as the penalty you pay for missing, causes you to take greater pains. The body of a blue-rock pigeon is smaller even than that of a partridge, and unless you get this little object in the centre of the charge you will

never kill a long series. This immensely raises your standard of accuracy, and obliges you, as it were, to screw your aim into the very bull's-eye. I have found it pay better to begin by shooting rather slower, if anything, at very fast birds, so as to be sure to be well in the middle, and as the range and size of the bird, as well as often the flight, are much like what you have to deal with in walking up partridges, I think the one will improve you for the other. It is a well-known fact among pigeon-shooters that some practice at starlings just previously to a match improves your form; in the same way practice at pigeons will improve it at partridges. This is not the place to enter upon the merits or the evils of pigeon-shooting, but as I said I would set down my experiences, I cannot omit this one.

Without yielding to any one in my aversion to the slaughter of anything that is not a legitimate object of pursuit as game or food, I would still recommend practice with the gun whenever and wherever possible consistently with humanity. If just before the shooting season you like to plant yourself in the line of the sparrows passing to and from the cornfields, you will be saving some bushels of corn to the distressed farmer without violating your humane conscience and you will find your form at partridges vastly improved.

Whoever takes advantage of this hint to slay swallows, starlings, or other insectivorous birds, must also take the responsibility ; I only suggest this where there are, as in many agricultural districts, very large quantities of grain-eating birds.

The first-rate performer is always a safe man to shoot with. Pages of good advice have been written on this head, and by the best authorities. I will only add one thing : bear in mind that you are more likely to shoot the man two or three places off than the man next you. Let your mind while you are out shooting be always studying and comparing distances and angles, a perfect judgment of which is an invariable attribute of a gunner of the first quality. I have been fortunate enough to shoot sometimes for weeks together without ever hearing the rattle of a shot near me, or seeing a gun even pointed for a moment in a dangerous direction.

'I am a great believer in style ; I never saw a good shot yet who hadn't style,' said Mr. Purdey to me one day ; and I quite agree with him. Mr. Purdey's recollections of the great shots of the last generation as well as of the present are varied and interesting.

Now, what is it that makes up 'style,' that indefinable, but invariable, attribute of a first-rate man? I

have seen men who must be described as good shots, even very good, but who are without it; they never seem to kill the bird at the right moment nor in the right way, and yet they will contribute their full share of the day's total, and do as well as better men, unless exceptional opportunities or conditions give the latter their chance to show their superior quality. Let there come a really heavy rush of birds, lasting for some time, or a very queer light, or a heavy gale of wind, or all these three conditions combined, and these men will fall far behind our first-rate friend, so far that you would hardly believe the difference could be due to anything but luck, having seen them miss so little previously.

The style of a first-rate man is unmistakable, difficult as it may be to define or describe. It is, no doubt, primarily due to a mixture of activity and strength, combining to assist exceptionally fine eyesight. To these must be added, I think, some intellectual ability. I do not recollect an instance of a first-rate shot being a stupid man, nor do I see how he could be. A certain mathematical aptitude, which finds vent in calculation of distances and study of angles, is an essential; and combined with this, and perhaps producing it, is a love of accuracy in all things. This latter quality assists the development

of the first-rate sportsman and naturalist no less than of the first-rate shot. Here is a simple instance : A whole posse of keepers, beaters and loaders of the ordinary sort may agree that a bird dropped just over a fence. The first-rate shot (I can find no better term to describe him) alone expresses doubt. The bird, no doubt, got over the fence at the point unanimously agreed on, but he alone doubts his having dropped at once. On seeking for this bird much time is wasted in following the verdict of the majority, and it is eventually found to have crossed the whole of the next field before dropping under the next fence beyond. This is not experience, for the keepers, and probably some of the beaters, have plenty of that in such matters. It is simply that the accurate mind of our first-rate friend, though he expected the bird to drop after topping the fence, was not satisfied, although it lowered its level of flight again, that it did so 'in articulo mortis.'

I have perhaps wandered from the question of style to that of the attributes which produce it naturally ; but a great deal of style in shooting is acquired. The feet must be firm on the ground, the body not bent forward, as shown in so many inferior pictorial representations, but 'trunk erect,' as Kentfield has it in his book on billiards. What you will find

out of date in watching John Roberts, or any modern light of the billiard world, is very much 'up to date' in shooting. The shooter must stand well up to his gun, and it is a fact not generally known, that a powerful man who does this will cause a gun to shoot harder than a limp man who does not.

The left hand, as we have been rightly told in the Badminton Library and elsewhere, should be well forward on the barrels; but this is not all. It is the left arm, wrist and hand, which must do all the work of swinging and directing the gun. If you hold your gun as recommended in old books, the left hand on, or close to the trigger-guard, you will find that to swing it quickly you have to push from your right elbow, and that this will affect the whole inclination of your body. You will not succeed in swinging the gun rapidly or accurately, and you will inevitably twist the barrels over to the left; this is one of the most frequent sources of missing, and one the avoidance of which, though an essential point in the education of a trained rifle-shot, is usually lost sight of with reference to the shot gun. It is of the last importance that your gun should be *level* to get a correct aim. The left hand alone, with its strong forward grip of the barrel, can insure this result, while the bad habit of allowing the elbow of the right arm to be too high is distinctly

against it. I have seen very fine shots who raised the right elbow much too high, but they were very strong with the left wrist as well, and, at any rate, the lifting of the right arm could be of no possible help to them.

Years ago I designed a sight especially to counteract this fault, primarily in rifle-shooting, and had it made by what was then the firm of Gye & Moncrieffe, to be fixed on my deer-stalking rifle. But when made in an experimental manner out of wood, and fitted on over the rib of a shot gun, it is an admirable lesson to show the result of twisting the barrels.

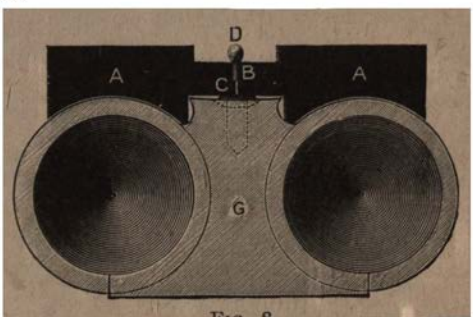

FIG. 8

A A, ebony or ebonised wood; B, rectangular nick; C, platinum or ivory vertical bar; D, foresight as it appears over nick; G, breech of gun.

If you aim at an object, then close the left eye and look along the barrels, you will find that the very slightest twist throws the foresight off its proper place,

just over the nick. This will occur, no doubt, to a certain extent with any sight; but this one, which was christened the 'Wortley' sight, is designed on the principle of vertical and horizontal lines exclusively, and any deviation from the level is much more readily detected than with a V or a pyramid sight.

Holding the left hand far back, close to the trigger-guard, is long ago obsolete, but there are many people who, though they hold it fairly forward, yet do most of the work by pushing or pulling with the right arm. I have always noticed these to be very bad shots. As regards the safety of holding the left hand forward, I can only relate my own experience. I was, as a boy at a private tutor's, lent a gun by a country gun-maker while he repaired mine. This piece incontinently burst the first day I took it out. I had already acquired the habit of stretching my left hand well forward, and it was lucky I had, for a large piece was blown clean out of the right barrel close to the breech, and whizzed over the heads of my neighbours, thirty yards off. If I had held the gun in the old-fashioned way I must have lost at least three fingers of my left hand. The gun was a muzzle-loader.

Never be put off by being told that rifle-shooting will spoil your game-shooting. This is absolute

rubbish. The two forms of shooting are so unlike that there is no necessity for allowing the one to confuse you for the other. I remember going to stay with de Grey at Nocton, in Lincolnshire, which then belonged to Lord Ripon, accompanied by the late George Ward Hunt, almost the most brilliant shot with gun and rifle that I have ever seen. The rooks were in thousands, very forward, and though many still sat on the trees, the majority flew as well and as high as good rocketing pheasants. We were each armed with two breech-loaders and one, or perhaps two, rifles, and the way those rooks rained down alternately from trees and sky was a sight. I think we killed about 1,100 in three hours one day at Gautby, an old property of the Vyners across the fen. We came up to London the next day, and on turning up at Hurlingham were, of course, told that not much could be expected of us as we had been rook-shooting. De Grey, however, won the cup, and I was second. I was also lucky enough one year to win the principal prize at the Running Deer at Wimbledon on the Thursday, and a cup at pigeons at Hurlingham on the Friday, having had a deer-stalking rifle continuously in my hand during the whole of the Wimbledon fortnight.

My readers will, I hope, forgive my relating this;

but I have so often had to listen to the reiteration of this nonsense about rifle-shooting being fatal to game-shooting that I have thought it well to record these facts. I am very sure that either de Grey or Henry Whitehead of Bury, who were in constant practice with both gun and rifle, and no doubt others, would have been equally capable of doing it.

Another important feature of good style is 'time.' There is, no doubt, one moment in the flight of most birds you shoot at when they are more *killable* than at any other. Whether this be really so in all shots it is hard to say, but at any rate it always appears so, and if you are looking on at a first-rate shooting performance you will notice that the discharge and the death of the bird always occur precisely at the moment when you feel that they should do so. A bad or moderate shot nearly always appears to shoot either too soon or too late.

Now, *time* is very essential in partridge-shooting. The partridge is a small and not a tough bird, and often very close to you, both when you are driving and walking; consequently he must not be smashed. But he is a very fast bird, and, therefore, must not be allowed to go too far. If one can at all lay down a rule, I would say shoot soon at him when he is driven, and late rather than too soon when he rises near you.

Of course, in driving you must shoot sooner, if you mean to try and kill two in front of you, than you need or ought to shoot at a single bird. You *may* kill four birds out of a covey, but to allow you to do this they must either be streaming, so to speak, in column, with a long distance between the first bird and the last, or they must break up on clearing the fence and fly more or less round you, and it must be early in the season, when they fly slower. To kill, late in the year, four birds out of a covey that comes straight over your head, all more or less abreast and with any pace on, is to my thinking impossible ; I have never seen it done, and never expect to.

CHAPTER III

DRIVING

'THE Driving of Partridges is more delightful than any other way of taking them; the manner of it is thus:—make an Engine in the form and fashion of a Horſe, cut out of Canvas, and ſtuff it with ſtraw or ſuch light matter; with this artificial Horſe and your Nets you muſt go to the haunts of the Partridges, and having found out the Covie and pitcht your nets below, you muſt go above and taking advantage of the Wind, you muſt drive downward; Let your Nets be pitcht ſlope-wise and hovering. Then, having your face covered with ſomething that is green, or of a dark blue, you muſt, putting the Engine before you, ſtalk towards the Partridges with a ſlow pace raising them on their feet, but not their wings, and then they will run naturally before you. If they chance to run a by way, or contrary to your purpoſe, then cross them with your engine, and by ſo facing them, they will run into that track you would have them. Thus

by a gentle ſlow pace you may make them run and go which way you will, and at laſt drive them into your Net, and ſo diſpoſe of them at your pleaſure.'

Thus the worthy Nicholas Cox, in the 'Gentleman's Recreation,' printed in 1686. What would he say, I wonder, could he resume this mortal habit, and see us driving partridges nowadays? 'The Driving of Partridges is more delightful than any other way of taking them'—and so it is; but what a contrast between this old-world fowler of the time of James II. with his nets, his 'engine' of a canvas horse stuffed with straw, for 'driving partridges,' and the keeper of to-day, ashplant or flag in hand, commanding a line of 40 men across well-hoed turnips or bare stubbles, to bring the birds to another line where modern breechloaders and smokeless powder, cracking lightly like the musketry fire of battle, bring down these swerving racing birds; to be tossed in clusters afterwards into the modern game-cart, with its protecting roof, its hooks for partridges and hares, its confusion of magazines, cartridge-bags, gun-covers, and overcoats, and its trusty pensioner with book and pencil to keep the tally of the slain.

Not but what the old fowler knew a thing or two, not to be despised by the driver of to-day. Observe how, 'having found out the Covie,' he directs you

A. J. Stuart-Wortley

WITH THE DRIVERS

'having pitcht your nets below' to 'go above and, taking advantage of the Wind, drive downward.' Substitute guns for nets, and the sentence may stand as it is for instruction to-day. Right he is indeed to spell Wind with a capital W, for is it not a most important factor in driving or any other form of sport? In the days of Nicholas Cox every fowler, hawker, or keeper was brought up to study the direction of the wind as his first guide to securing game; and it is lamentable to see how little this fundamental condition is attended to by the modern keeper or sportsman. It seems in our day (with a few notable exceptions) to be the monopoly of Scotch stalkers and ghillies. I have heard a Scotch beater describe the locality of a dead bird which was difficult to find, as lying 'a wee thing wast of the dog's nose' that was pointing it. They reckon by wind. What English keeper, excepting always a very few whose knowledge of this subject has helped them largely in acquiring their well-deserved reputations, would talk of anything as being 'west of a dog's nose,' or, for the matter of that, would know whether the wind was blowing from east or west? He and his master arrange the order of the drives days beforehand; and whether it blows lightly from the south-east, or heavily from south-west, the programme is carried out, the order is main-

tained, the fence where 'we had such a fine drive last year' yields but little, and the whole day is a succession of disappointments. Why? Because the wind is entirely different, and has not been taken into consideration.

Nothing can be better than the remarks and instructions on partridge-driving and wind in Payne-Gallwey's 'Letters to Young Shooters,' p. 239. I can add but little to them, but further urge both hosts and keepers to study the wind, and to lay out for the following day alternative plans for drives which can be adopted or not according to its direction. Begin at the top of the wind and drive down; your up-wind drives which come after will then contribute the heaviest part of your bag. And in driving across the wind, the most difficult of all, remember that every driver on the up-wind side represents in value six men on the down-wind side. Let the down-wind flank of your drive be most numerously protected and by your most active drivers, and, if you are not drawing lots for places, by your best guns. On this side nothing but the deadly tube in the hands of a very good shot will stop a partridge when in the swing of his flight. He can only be guided to the front or centre by what he hears before rising, or sees the instant he gets off the ground. The flankers on the

down-wind side must therefore be well ahead—as at A in the accompanying diagram—before the drivers at B have begun to move or have flushed the birds. C is the centre of the line of guns to which it is desired to drive the birds, and the arrow points in the direction of the wind. When once the birds are up

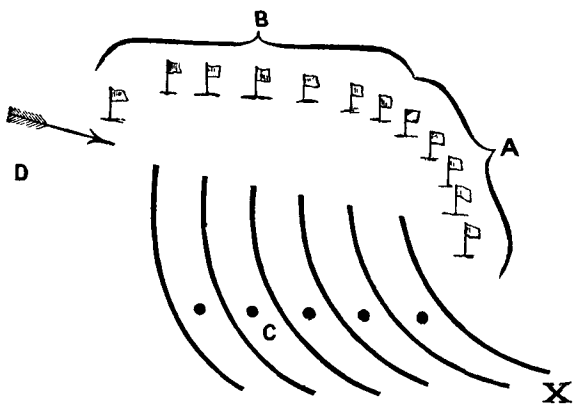

FIG. 9

and in full swing down wind, an army would not turn them towards the point C. But if while still squatting on the ground they hear or see men passing on at A, they will, when they rise, push on to C to avoid them. If the wind be heavy, there is little fear of their breaking out at D ; and one judicious driver of experience creeping a little ahead of the others on that

side can prevent this. No shouting or waving of flags on the windward side, but plenty of it on the other side as soon as ever birds are on the wing.

The main direction of the flight will be towards the point x, and you will notice that many of the birds after the fright of passing over the line of guns will swing more than ever with the wind. You will therefore do no good by trying a return drive over the same fence from ground straight behind the guns, as ignorant keepers often do when there is a cross-wind. Your birds will have all gone to x; and from there you must proceed with your next drive if you wish to bring back the same lot of birds. In a hilly country the tendency of all birds is to fly along the hill, though they may be pushed pretty straight up it. But they never drive well down hill unless there is some covert on the opposite side which they must make for. If the ground dips heavily behind where you stand for the drive, and you have leisure to observe the birds, you will notice how they scatter right and left after passing over you, and how few keep straight on over the valley to the opposite hill. In this they resemble grouse; though they are of course more influenced by the situation of the root crops or other covert.

What a delightful sensation is the condition of

expectancy after you have been placed for what you know is going to be a good drive! Perchance it is a bright October day, the temperature perfect, the sunshine warm, and as your feet rest on the sandy soil of Cambridgeshire, so congenial to game, you survey the scene around you with an easily formed resolution in your mind to forget your worries and cares, and give yourself up to all the enjoyment which a lovely morning, an orderly digestion, and (let us hope) a good conscience can combine to afford. You have adjusted your distance to the fence to a nicety; and, lightly, but warmly, clad, you balance yourself on your shooting-stick in complete comfort; heightened by the consciousness of your perfect pair of guns, your carefully-loaded cartridges, and the trustworthy qualities of your servant or loader kneeling close behind you; his prospective services supplemented by one of your host's smartest under-keepers, and a third season wavy-coated retriever of the best breed and varied olfactory experience. It is the third drive of the day, expected to be one of the best; you are No. 3 of the line of six guns, and all your neighbours can be relied on not to shoot near the line. In front is an ideal fence for driving, some ten or twelve feet high, with broken interstices through which you catch the blue-green glint of the swedes, and where, later

on, you will get a warning glimpse of approaching wings.

Twenty yards to your left an oak, gnarled and weather-beaten, but disdaining to turn a leaf until the later frosts, mingles his foliage with the russet and green of the tangled fence. About the same distance on your right is a gap, with a sort of rude stile or bar across it, close to where the cross fence on the other side—there is none on yours—divides the turnips from the stubble. Between the oak and the cross fence they will surely come, and especially must the gap be watched, for it will draw them from both fields, and is just at the right killing distance. Behind and on your right a glimpse of greyish green hill, surmounted by a plantation, on which crawls swiftly a little file of living objects. Slender as mosquitoes, flashing back here and there a note of white or blue to the October sun, seeming hardly connected, so impalpable are they in detail, with the long strip of grey green along which they move with easy but deliberate precision. The Limekilns! and a string of the best blood in England returning from their morning gallop, with, likely enough, next Wednesday's Cesarewitch winner among them. Farther on, directly behind you, surrounded at odd intervals by long, low, isolated specks of white or red, nestling in plantations

THE FIRST SIGHT OF THE BEATERS

or fronting the white roads, lies Newmarket, the outlines of its buildings not yet distinct amid the blue smoke of its breakfast fires and the golden haze of this glorious autumn morning. Away and beyond the town the long thin lines of black green belt intersect the rolling stubbles and fallows of Six-Mile Bottom, Dullingham, or Cheveley, until, melting in the far distance, a faint cloud of brownish smoke mingles with the azure atmosphere that aptly hangs over the Light Blue University.

Or change the time and scene; the actors and the characters the same. The grass crackles as you shift your feet to keep them warm, crushing the frosted splinters from the blades; the gorse, coated in crystal globules, sends down a powdery shower as you kick it, revealing its spiked clusters underneath, green, warm, and living, or tawny and dead, but clasping the golden blossom which, like the kiss, is never out of season. The black green belt of firs against the northern blue in front sways lightly as the breeze comes to it from the east, turning your eyes to where, far on the right, the village with its square church tower guards the heath. Beyond again, without a break or undulation, without a hill or hollow, stubble, heath, and fallow stretch away, until, melting in a still grey bar, you know the ocean; unbroken,

save where, one black speck upon the steel, the hardy collier ploughs along, daring the wintry dangers of the North Sea. As the tardy December sun peeps from the haze, the chirping call from all parts of the heath and from the light lands in front and to the west tells that the coveys scent the growing danger. Dull in tone, and weird in form against the sky, the Norfolk plover makes away towards the sea, as a far-off shout tells of the drive begun, and light reports of other guns booming from more than one quarter remind you that this is the king of game-counties, and that all the world—the Norfolk world—is out shooting.

Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.

Again the scene is changed. You stand on Itchen Down, and while you sniff the bracing air you strain your eyes to mark, amid the blue distance, beyond the rolling slopes of sheltering woods and open field, the spire of Salisbury or the clustering towers of William of Wykeham; to trace the specks of light that tell where the silver stream of Test gives back the November rays, or to wonder whether, far in the south-west, your eye can reach to where the great ocean liners are thundering up and down the Solent. The tinkle of sheep-bells strikes sharply on the ear,

and you watch on the lower stretch of down opposite how the shepherd guides the sheep, down past the chalk-pit cutting like a white wound in the hill, through the junipers and straggling patches of gorse to the great yew-tree overhanging the gateway, till the flock pours like a stream of oil into the turnip field where they are to feed. A feeling of contentment spreads over you as you survey the great fence of thorn in front of you, so big and thick that a dozen or so of stunted oaks and hollies are almost lost in it, while not a speck of sky shows through till ten feet from the ground. A white butterfly, the last of the year, comes dancing down the stubble, settles on the fence, uneasily flickers over the top, and disappears. Aimlessly you push the safety bolt of your gun up and down as the barrels lie at ease in the palm of your left hand, and lazily you wonder whether that bit of bright red down the fence is an autumn leaf, or a bit of cloth, or what; and then whether the birds will come to the right or left of the big holly, or over the tall spray of briar which sticks up, still bearing one bright golden leaf, just where the butterfly disappeared!

And the butterfly takes you back to the summer, and you dream for a spell. Is it of the big trout you lost in the Test, or is it of the night she looked so heavenly as the diamonds flashed on her white skin

at the opera, or of the little lock of chestnut hair, which even she does not know is lying now in your pocket, so near—so much too near—your heart? 'Non, je mourrais, mais je veux la revoir,' sings in your ears the glorious voice of Jean de Reszké. Again your thoughts fly off; to the tropical marsh and the snorting rush of the wounded rhino through the reeds; to your shares in the new drifts of Mashonaland, and their possible value; to the horse that failed by a short head to land the '1,000 to 30, twice' that might have saved you; to the dire confusion following, and your flight by reason of this to Afric's coral strand; to the cares and complications, the duns and dilemmas of London life. And as these almost bring you back to consciousness, a fresher gust of breeze sweeps down the fence, and—'Hold up those birds there, on the left; hold 'em up, hold 'em up!' The clear voice of Marlowe, prince of partridge-drivers, ringing out from the down-wind side, the crack of his whip, and the rattle of his horse's feet tell you that he is already round and into the turnips, and with a sharp whirring rattle, like the flutter of a moth's wings in a cardboard box, three birds are over the fence on your left, and almost on you before you see them. Up and round you swing, killing one stone dead, but the second was too far,

and they are gone. Involuntarily you look at your neighbour, a man there is no deceiving, for you know you were caught napping, and ought to have killed one of those in front of you, and the little half-sarcastic glance out of the corner of his right eye, though he never moves his head, tells you he saw it all. 'Over, gentlemen—over the right!' is now the cry, and with a whirr that is almost a roar a big lot breaks all over the fence to your right and in front. Now thoroughly awake, you kill three neatly, quickly followed by a smart right and left—one in front and one behind—at a brace that come straight at you, immediately followed by misses with both barrels at one hanging along the fence and inclined to go back over the beaters. You strike him underneath with the second, he winces, rises a little, and just as he seems to turn is crumpled up dead by the professor on your left, a beautiful long cross shot, and you are fain to touch your hat and acknowledge a clean wipe. But now they come thick, and being just angry enough, you settle into form; for though your left arm feels like iron, and your grip on the fore-end like a vice, yet your actions are getting the looseness and your style the freedom that good form, confidence, and lots of shooting inspire, and you begin to 'play the hose upon them' properly. Here and there a

miss, sometimes two running, generally poking shots at birds which have passed close by while you were changing guns, and which somehow baffle you against the rising stubble behind. Why you don't know, but you miss three or four in the same place and in the same way, though otherwise you are 'all right.' A great big lot, three or four coveys packed together, pours out at the upper end over the left hand, and, swinging round in the wind, heads straight down the line of guns. Here they come, streaming high and fast, getting a broadside from each of the men on your left. 'One—two' with your first gun, 'three—four' with your second—the last a beauty, and as they come clattering down like cricket balls about the head of your right-hand neighbour, you feel you have done your duty.

A hare leaps through a run in the fence bottom, sits foolishly with ears laid back for a second, and then dashes for it past you. Let her go, she will do to breathe the farmer's greyhounds in February; 'here's metal more attractive,' for birds are still coming. But the whimpering of your retriever at the close view of the forbidden fur, and the consequent objurgations of the keeper behind, sufficiently distract you to make you snap at and miss an easy bird in front with your first, and turn and

fiercely drive it into him much too close with your second.

'D—n the hare,' you mutter aloud as you change your gun ; but the men are getting near, you hear the whish and rustle of the flags, a few more desultory lots come screaming over, and pretty it is, looking down the line, to see them drop out as they pass, for the performers on either side of you are picked from the best in England. A few more 'singletons' to each gun, all killed but one, at which four barrels are fired, and which towers far away back.

'Anything to pick up this side, gentlemen?' sings out Marlowe ; in another minute he and his horse come crashing through the gap, the white smocks and flags are peeping through unforeseen holes in the fence, all the dogs are loose and ranging far and wide, the guns and loaders scattered, picking up in all directions, and the drive of the season is over.

Seventy-five brace in the single drive, of which forty birds you can honestly claim, having laid their corpses in a fair row ere they are hurled by the old pensioner into his sack, and you find yourself shouted, whistled, nay, sworn at, to get on to the next drive.

Glad are you in your heart, for that was a good score, well and truly made. You will not always be in

the best place of the best drive, nor always in your best form when you are there, and forty partridges in one drive falls not to a man's lot more than a few times in his life.

How different it is when on some other day you are on the flank, when birds are scarcer, and such as come stream persistently to the other end of the line; when gales blow and waiting is long, when raindrops stand like beads on the barrel of your gun, drip from the back of your cap on to the chilled marrow of your spinal column, and trickle chilly from the wrist to the elbow of your forward arm;—when through numbness of fingers and general want of circulation you have missed the only two shots you have had for an hour; when the drivers have hardly energy to walk or shout, cloyed as their progress is by their dripping smocks; when, as the storm grows blacker in the north-west, there is nothing before you but one more dreary drive, in which your position on the other flank will give you no chance to retrieve your temperature or your reputation, and then a long soaking walk home of three or four miles, which you, being at the farthest point from home, are left to share with the only one of your party in whose society you take no pleasure, depressed, disappointed, damp, and, worst of all, defeated.

Why dwell on such a day? We will not, nor need we mention it, but that I think it helps to give the other days their value. And as the sun will not always shine, nor the wind always blow right, nor birds always come to you, neither can we, any of us, always be in tiptop form. Have you not often heard said, or said yourself, 'I have found out what I was doing with those guns all last week, I was shooting *in front* of everything'? and then added, but not out loud, 'Ah! I shall never miss again.' Fond and fatal delusion! You are really shooting *more in front* than last week, for you are fitter; but on your days of 'rheum and cholick' you will shoot '*in front of everything*' many a time again. The man who makes the most even performance is he who lives for it, and his is the greater certainty and the greater reputation.

Here a word or two to my young readers. Many a time have I left London, as I hope they will, for a real good week at a place where I was most keen to excel. Unconsciously excited from the start, my keenness has increased as I sniffed the glorious air of a good game country on arrival. Bright eyes and cheerful company, '74 champagne, '40 port, and '20 brandy, to the accompaniment of reminiscences of flood and field, of hopes and anticipations and record-breaking bags, have sufficed to raise the fluid in my

veins to fever pitch, and I have gone to my comfortable bedroom feeling that life was really worth living. This is, no doubt, good living; but it will not mean good shooting next day. After an almost sleepless night breakfast will revolt your feverish eye, and the hurried start still further discompose your turgid brain and congested liver. The simplest partridge will defeat you, and though you may kill a proportion of birds from *knowledge*, you will achieve nothing from *form*, whilst even Schultz or E.C. may not save you from that peculiar class of 'head' which feels after each shot like the opening and shutting of a heavy book charged with electricity. This miserable state of things always reminds me of the burly vendor of hot potatoes in Leech's inimitable drawing, who thus to the small boy in the big muffler on the pavement holding his 'tummy' with both hands, 'Made yer ill, 'ave they? Ah, that's 'cos yer aint accustomed to 'igh livin'.'

Well, you may or may not be accustomed to 'igh livin', but high living and high birds never did go together, and unless you cut down the one you will never bring down the other. Change of air and excitement, the latter probably a much more frequent condition of your mind than you are inclined to suppose or prepared to admit, will upset any one; but a very little

care on first arriving at the scene of your week's sport will keep you fairly right. Eschew the late afternoon tea, which is too often only a severe astringent dose of tannic acid, rendered still more noxious by luxuriantly buttered toast; eat and drink lightly at dinner, make but moderate love (this book is not written for ladies, and if it were they must know that 'there is causes and occasions why and wherefore in all things,' as Fluellen says); curtail the hour of the smoking-room and the consumption of the weed by one half; the spirits and soda altogether; and when you go to bed take about a teaspoonful of mixed bicarbonate of soda and ditto of potass; then you will sleep, as well as wake, cool and fit to take your part, at any rate up to your usual capacity, in the day's sport.

This to those who wish to feel there is no distance they cannot walk, no bird they might not kill, and no one they could possibly hate, in short, to feel fit and shoot really well. To some others, if they will forgive me, I would say, Eat the buttered toast, swallow the tea, drink the champagne, discuss the port and sample the 'old,' make love to the prettiest woman, tell all the best stories and sing the latest songs, smoke the largest regalia and go to bed last, in short, enjoy everything, but don't for the love of heaven go out shooting. And who knows but that you may

enjoy your week, and be as great an acquisition to your host and hostess as the most serious gunner of us all?

I have purposely interpolated this advice in the chapter on Driving, because it is precisely at the places where the driving is of the best that we are likely to be most tempted to the indulgence of our appetites, and equally because driving is precisely the sport wherein we shall the most suffer for the indulgence. The host who does his shooting really well, most probably 'does you well' in all other things, and the combination of Nimrod and Lucullus is often to be found in the England of to-day.

It is impossible, in my opinion, to tell any one *how* to shoot driven partridges, further than it has been set down already in what I have written in a former chapter about calculation. In the matter of how to make the most of your chances, however, there is a word or two to be added. The importance of standing at the right distance from the fence cannot be over-estimated. Stand well back, even as far as twenty-five or thirty yards from a really high fence, unless, as sometimes happens, you are asked not to do so, because of the ground being near the boundary, or for some reason connected with the succeeding drive. Let there be no one under the fence in front

STANDING BACK FROM A HIGH FENCE

of the guns—the practice of allowing spectators or keepers to squat under the fence in front is very unsafe and much against the interests of the bag.

If there are persons under the fence in front of you, it is not so much against your interests as against those of your neighbours. The line from where your neighbour stands to where these people sit, when the guns are placed a long way back from the fence, falls just at a very killing angle for him. In the diagram here shown there are two people under the fence at the point *m*, opposite the gun A. Now, A. need not shoot them, though they are probably not safe even from him, as I will presently show; but B., C. and D., especially B., could all kill birds at the points denoted by x, which ought to be perfectly safe for those shooters; but, as the lines show, would not be if there are people at *m*. As far as B. and C. are concerned, the point x is

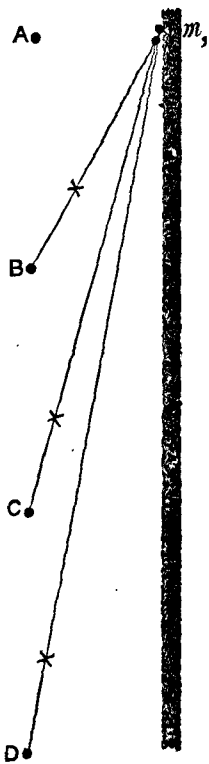

FIG. 10

one at which a first-rate man would kill a good many birds in the course of a good day's driving, while, though it would be rather a close shot to the line for D., yet, if the bird were fairly high he would be justified in taking it; but he would in that case be at exactly the right distance and elevation to blind the people at *m*. The point that it gives the guns *two* lines of danger to bear in mind, instead of one, is also an important one, and considering the number of accidents that have taken place through people forgetting one line, it is not fair or right to add to the risk by making a second. Neither are they really safe from A. himself, if he is to fire, as he certainly should, at birds coming straight to him over the fence and over their heads. There is always danger of dropping, or, to speak more correctly, diverging shot below the point aimed at. I had a very practical experience of this, which is worth quoting. At the Gun Club we used to allow 'byes,' that is, trial birds, before the competition began. As we were only allowed one each, we used to back each other up, so that, if the shooter whose bye it was missed it altogether, we got a shot at it to try and wipe his eye after he had done with it.[1] I backed up somebody who missed his

[1] This 'backing up' has long since been forbidden both at the Gun Club and Hurlingham.

bird with both barrels, and by a fluke I killed it quite dead at about seventy yards off, close to the boundary; but the dog who retrieved the birds, and who was allowed loose during the bye-shooting, was careering about some eight or ten yards in front, and between me and the bird. Instead of rushing after it, he yelled and ran in among us, with his tail down, whimpering; a shot from my gun had penetrated his head through the thick hair, and drawn blood. That it was a diverging or dropping shot was proved by my having the luck to kill the bird, the line of which was much above him, while the force with which it struck him was remarkable. But they used to chaff and call out, 'Who shot the dog?' to me often afterwards, and I have never fired directly over any one since, except at a high elevation. The gunmaker's assistants present, men who are constantly 'plating' guns, told us that so well did they know this danger that they never allowed one of their own dogs to run about in front when they were shooting trials. Yet I have seen men who are good and careful shots plugging away at birds coming at them over the fence, with their loving wives or children sitting under it, and exactly exposed to this risk. Close behind the gun and his loader, in a sitting or kneeling posture, is the safest and most convenient place for spectators.

Undoubtedly, the more shooting you can do in front, before birds pass you, the better; and as long as there are birds coming on, you should never turn round at all.

On the whole, I am against scoring, as a matter of rivalry, one against the other. It is not always a true test of form, although the luck will generally equalise itself over a certain number of days, and if it promotes good shooting it also encourages jealousy, greediness and grumbling. But it is very necessary to master the art of counting the number of birds you have killed in each drive, that you may know how many you have to look for, and so not leave them on the ground, and as a check on the pilfering of birds by beaters or spectators. This is a much vexed question, but it may be easily settled by the host keeping count of each person's claim after every drive—only birds actually picked up being counted—without putting them against any name, as thus:

5 —14—11—13—2—9 = 54
10—11—1 —7 —8—3 = 40

Here are ninety-four birds claimed in two drives, but no individual name against the individual scores, which, not being put down in the order of the stands, will by the end of the day be well nigh untraceable;

while so long as each claim is made honestly, the collective amount is what should be found in the bag. I remember once persuading my host, a man generous and easy-going to a fault, to let me do this, though it had never been the custom at his place. The tally was kept—we were all well used to driving and scoring—and the claims were undoubtedly genuine. At luncheon-time the bag returned was eighteen brace of partridges short of our claim. The keeper, a very good man, was sent for and told to look closely to the matter. At the end of the day eleven brace out of the missing eighteen had been recovered, and the bag for the afternoon tallied exactly with our claim. Little heaps of birds, forgotten or missed over by the collector with the cart, will sometimes be left to rot on the ground, unless some sort of score is kept. Everything possible should be done to pick up or kill wounded birds after the drive, provided always that in hunting you do not go far enough to disturb the ground of the next drive. This is an unpardonable crime. By shooting birds which rise as you walk from drive to drive, I think you do more good than harm, for they are of no use where they are, and in most cases are slightly pricked; but there should be no firing or noise of any kind as you get close to the fence where you are to drive. If the fence be scanty,

and the wind blowing from you and against the birds, you will ruin the finest drive in the world by talking as you go along the fence to your places. This point is not half enough observed, but it is often the absolute reason of the majority of the birds breaking out at the sides instead of coming forward.

Where possible, let the host place the guns and the head-keeper come with the drive. The keeper may do both if, as Marlowe [1] does, he rides on horseback and gets round quickly enough to avoid keeping the guns waiting; he should always take the centre of the line, and have sole command. Often the flank drivers cannot see that birds are coming towards them with a view to break out, and it is only from the centre that they can be warned in time to turn them.

If you have to wait at your stands, while drivers are sent round, always look out for birds put up by them as they skirt the ground to be driven; some of these are sure to turn back over you, and if you are on the flank may give your only chances in the drive. The good man having gone to his post, is ready from that moment, and his eyes are seldom off the fence or ground in front of him. Nothing moves within the range of his vision that he does not see, and many a bird will he kill at the beginning of a drive that comes

[1] See p. 130.

STANDING UP TO A LOW FENCE

unexpectedly over the fence, swerves from one of his unready neighbours, and flies, an easy prey, into his range.

Neither will he as a rule walk empty-handed from drive to drive. By this means many pretty chance shots are lost, whilst a loader unless very practised is seldom really safe carrying two guns, a heavy bag of cartridges, and possibly a shooting-seat across field, fence and ditch. If fatigued by carrying too much weight, it is natural also that he will not be as keen and lively to mark or pick up your birds.

When standing up to a low fence, do all you can to improve your position. When you have time, cut down or make up the fence in front of you as seems necessary, and see that you stand if possible on level ground. When standing on rough fallow it is well also to smooth the ground a little, that you may not be discomfited by falling over great clods of earth as you swing round at fast-flying birds.

To those who are keen, and who love partridge-driving well conceived, well managed, and well treated, all these things will soon come as second nature. To those who go out merely to air their guns or their clothes, to talk money or racing, politics or women, to smoke and eat luncheon, not caring for a good bag nor how it is made up, these remarks are not addressed. They will never trouble to read them.

CHAPTER IV

WALKING UP

UNDER this head we must include all that there is to be said, and I fear that can be very little in these days, about shooting partridges over dogs. The almost complete abandonment of the pointer and setter on the manors and fields of England was primarily due to the disappearance of the old-fashioned stubble. General cleaning of lands, clearing out of ditches, and trimming down of the old hedgerows to the level of the modern fence, which shelters neither bird, beast, nor crop, have swept away the necessity for them on large estates. In former days the partridges had to be *found*, now you can see them in most counties three fields off from the main road. It is idle to say we are unsportsmanlike because we do not employ dogs, whose vocation it is to detect with their noses what we cannot see with our eyes, for hunting game which exists in such large quantities

that its whereabouts can be ascertained easily without their aid.

I must here be clear as to which class of shooter I am addressing. In consulting with A. (to adopt the symbol by which I designated him in a former chapter), I have to deal with one who habitually shoots on large estates, where partridges are plentiful, where there is a strong staff of keepers, with beaters at command, and where from three to six and even seven guns will often be sent out to walk up partridges, and the bag may be anything from fifty to two hundred brace.

In taking counsel with B., of whom we spoke before, conditions are different. The manors over which he shoots are small, likely enough they are surrounded by small freeholds, or unpreserved ground, marsh or common, keepers are few and poachers from the neighbouring villages are many, and it becomes a question of five to twenty-five brace of birds in the day.

The former has the birds found and driven in for him, and has then only to take his part like a gentleman and a sportsman in the day's proceedings. Even this seems to tax some shooters beyond their powers, and on this head I shall have a word or two to say presently. The latter has to find his birds, manage

them, consider his narrow boundaries, beat for them, and possibly carry them himself when killed.

There is much more ground in a high state of game preservation at the present day than there ever was, and the comparative values of famous sporting estates, with the doings of those who shoot over them, are much better known. All improvements in guns and gunnery, in rearing, stocking and preserving, beating and managing partridges or other game, originate on the larger properties and with those who shoot in the more luxurious and accomplished fashion, and have wider experience of different counties and climates; so I will address myself to the latter in the first place.

Tastes vary, with sportsmen as with other people, and although I would not in sporting matters quite endorse the old French proverb that 'tous les goûts sont respectables,' yet there is much to be said in favour of each of the different methods of killing partridges or grouse. You cannot expect a man who from indifferent eyesight, lack of judgment—of pace or distance—or deficiency of early training, finds that he cannot kill driven birds, and that consequently each succeeding day's driving is to him a fresh defeat or disappointment, while he is a fair performer at birds rising in front of him—you cannot expect such a man,

I say, to go on denying himself what suits him best, and to drive his ground because it is the fashion. He may be the owner of a good partridge estate, where he, his keepers, farmers and labourers are all on good terms, and the head of game is consequently always up to a certain average. He and his guests, and his father, and grandfather, and their guests, may have been able from time immemorial to kill eighty or a hundred brace of birds to four or five guns, while the keepers and beaters aforesaid may have inherited the traditions and perfected the knowledge which three generations of good sportsmen and loyal servants have handed down.

Such an one should not be cavilled at, nor considered to be behind the times because he prefers walking to driving his partridges, and some of his friends will find that he can teach a thing or two to those who devote themselves exclusively to the latter form of sport.

Again, he may have a fancy for breeding retrievers, or may have a boy or boys, fresh from Eton or Harrow, for whom it is his great pleasure to find amusement, and his great ambition that they should turn out good all-round sportsmen. Here again he will be quite right to walk up his partridges. A retriever who has not been broken to heel, and to stick to a

winged bird in turnips, will never be first-rate, even for driving purposes; and a boy who does not know how to carry his own gun, or use it when walking in line, nor how to handle that retriever, will never be a pleasant neighbour nor an accomplished performer in a good week's driving. One thing, however, I would beg of him—to decide finally which he prefers, and not to walk up his birds as well as drive them on the same ground. This is trying to eat your cake and have it, both with partridges and grouse. The walking up skims the cream, spoils the subsequent driving, and undoes the good the latter sport may do to the stock. The driving, after the ground has been already walked, is not worth having, and, if persisted in, is hard upon the stock of birds.

Driving partridges is the cream, the luxury, and poetry of the sport; walking up is the very marrow and essence of it. I defy any one to handle a line of men, or arrange a beat for driving, who has not plenty of experience in walking after them. The partridge, like most things, must be known from all points of view that he may be properly appreciated and dealt with. Walking up, or shooting partridges over dogs, is, in my judgment, the finest training of all for a young shooter. Here he can learn everything of the habits of the birds, of the instinct or the merits of the

dogs, of the faults and failings of the men ; and if he masters the art thoroughly, and can kill them really well, he will find himself, when he comes to join a select team for high-class driving, well able to hold his own, and will discover that there is no special 'knack' in killing driven birds. I have known a youngster, well trained to other sorts of shooting, to top the score at grouse the first day he ever saw a driven bird, and that against a more than average team.

On some manors, where driving has never as yet been adopted, and where only moderate bags have ever been achieved, it may be well to try it for three or four years, to disperse the coveys, change the blood, and kill off old barren birds. But this is only worth doing if you are prepared to stick to it, and to give up entirely the old-fashioned system, while you must expect some very disappointing days—days when the waiting is long and the shots scarce. For when, on poorly stocked ground, you have allowed the necessary margin for birds that must break out at the sides of the drives, the amount left to come over the guns will be small enough to try your patience greatly. If, after this experiment, which must be strictly carried out—that is to say, no walking or shooting over dogs allowed—you find your stock

greatly increased and your bags proportionately higher, it is worth while to persevere. But if, as in many places, the soil is not favourable to a large stock, and you still cannot raise enough birds to kill say from eighty to one hundred brace in a day, it is, in my opinion, better to stick to the system of walking, and to rely upon good keepering and judicious management for the best sport which this class of country will afford.

A great many partridge manors are much too hard shot, and have nothing like the stock upon them that the ground will carry (of this I shall have more to say in another chapter); but this is accounted for in many cases by the clinging to the old traditions in the early part of the season, shooting every beat by walking in the old way, and in the later part imitating the fashion, and pandering to an unworthy and hopeless desire to vie with the places where good bags are made by exclusive driving—a fatal combination which reduces your stock of birds, disappoints yourself, and enrages and discourages your keepers. Ground which has been shot over by walking, if decent bags have been made, is not worth driving, and I know nothing more dispiriting than to be told, as you are placed for a drive, 'You know, we have killed eighty brace off this ground already, and saw an awful lot of birds.'

'Yes,' you feel inclined to say, 'but the "awful lot" are no longer there; one hundred and sixty of them have been picked, trussed, and eaten, a few more died and were never retrieved, and what are left, though they would make a pretty wild sporting second-time-over shoot, will give us a very poor day's driving. If they were still here alive, together with the fifty brace which six of us will with difficulty secure to-day, we should have a pretty day.' To this his answer will probably be that he prefers smaller bags and more days. Well and good, but he has no business with the second day at all. It is too much for the ground, and if two days were to be made on the beat, this is not the way to make them, especially as he probably shot his eighty brace with inferior guns, and asked his best guns to the later driving. In these days the demand is not so much for a great number of days' shooting as for good and well-managed days, quality as to the number of days, quality and quantity combined, where possible, as regards the shooting.

There are now many more resources and localities open to every one. Life is busier, and most men have too much to do to shoot six or even four days a week right through the season. I am far from saying that a man has not a perfect right, or is not often justified,

in subdividing his sport over a large number of days, especially if he lives from week to week at home for the greater part of the year. In this case he will do much more good on and near his own estate than he who is constantly travelling about, racing or 'London-ising'; but he will be dependent on a different class for his guns. He cannot expect men to come and assist him in his days of forty or fifty brace, walking, who have the choice of other places where they can kill 150 brace, driving, unless there are other strong reasons to induce them to do so.

But there is room for all these points of view, and I, for one, cannot join those who turn their noses up at days of forty to sixty brace of partridges, walked up, in pleasant company. It must also be borne in mind on the side of the 'walker' that he can enjoy a number of days of a perfectly charming sort with two or three intimate friends, and without the trouble or expense of a large organised party; indeed, there are no days pleasanter than those which are thus spent in the pursuit of the partridge, where every beat on a large sporting estate is tried in turn. I used to pass many such at different places, and nowhere more pleasantly than with my uncle, the late Lord Wenlock, at Escrick. He and his eldest son, the present Governor of Madras, and I shot many a day together, and so

well did we know one another's form and every inch of the 17,000 acres, or thereabouts, which make up that well-known sporting estate, that I verily believe on that ground no three men could have beaten us. My uncle was almost like a boy himself, singularly active and powerful, and an exceptionally fine shot. We understood every wave of his hand or look of his eye, and learnt thoroughly all that can be done by three guns and a few well-trained men on the war-path for partridges, whether in the hot days of early September, when a good-natured tenant of the old-fashioned sort would insist on our walking through the standing barley and beans, or in the late October, when the fields were cleared, and by running, circumventing, half-mooning, and occasional impromptu driving, we managed to get the birds into a scanty field of cold wet swedes or a welcome bit of gorse-cover.

He had a little Irish red retriever, called Gunner, the best, I think, I ever saw. It was a treat to see this little beast on a winged bird. No jumping about with his head in the air, but with nose to the ground and at a terrific pace he would carry the scent down the drill right through fresh unsprung birds to the end of the field, double back, down and up again, lose it for a moment, execute a perfect cast for him-

self, off faster than before down to the end, racing along the fence towards the corner, and just as any one who didn't know him would be inclined to shout him back, a little whirr, the flash of the under-white of a wing, and Gunner caught the bird in the air, and trotted proudly back to his master without ruffling a feather.

In those days there were many hares, and in threading his way through a turnip field after a winged bird a dog must be trusted to pass by the temptation of the scent of fur as well as of fresh birds. I fear that since the introduction and spread of driving there are fewer masters and keepers who understand breaking and working a retriever than there were formerly. The well-broken retriever is more needed every day, as the pointer and setter recede before nineteenth century conditions of shooting, but I am afraid that he becomes scarcer. The demand is vastly in excess of the supply, and as there is no difficulty about multiplication of the species, and as the health and treatment of dogs are more humanely and scientifically understood than ever, we are forced to the conclusion that it is their training that is deficient.

Much as I love driving, I am afraid that it is largely responsible for this. As I hinted above, no dog will ever be really useful in the field, even where

driving is the exclusive method, who has not had birds shot *to him*, and been handled well in the pursuit of wounded game which is difficult to find, as, for example, of partridges in turnips on a bad scenting day. One of the most fruitful causes of demoralisation in retrievers that have only been used to driving is that they have been in the constant habit of seeing dead birds in numbers upon the ground. Where possible the line of guns is always placed in a field of pasture, stubble, or other tolerably bare ground, to facilitate the pick up after the drive, so that by the time a drive is over the dog has, perhaps, six or eight brace of birds within easy view lying quite dead. In the majority of places the retrievers are assigned to under-keepers, mostly under thirty years of age and of limited experience. These are chiefly recruited from one class, that is the sons or relations of older keepers. They are entirely dependent for their knowledge upon such instruction as they may have received from the chiefs under whom they have borne arms. But the chiefs themselves are no longer of the generation which studied the breaking in of dogs as one of the most essential parts of their functions. Modern shooting, with its rearing and watching, its diplomacy, its generalship, and all its elaborate machinery of organisation and detail,

leaves a head-keeper no time for the breaking of dogs, still less for the instruction of his subordinates in such an art. We have advanced in this as in other things, and must pay a penalty for our progress. We have more knowledge, more game, better management and better shooting, but incomparably worse dogs.

I can only offer one suggestion to remedy this state of things, which occurs to me irresistibly whenever I am lucky enough to stay with men who can afford to do their shooting on a handsome scale, and I believe it would pay even those who cannot afford in any way to add to their expenses. This is to employ a man—call him dog-man, under-keeper, or what you will, which merely means that he would be under the authority of the head-keeper—who should devote himself entirely to the breaking of your dogs, and on shooting days to attendance on the guns and retrieving the game. Of course, I am now more particularly speaking of England and partridge-shooting, for the same class of man, though devoted entirely to pointers and setters, is to be found on many well-ordered estates in Scotland.

It is really lamentable to any one who has experience of shooting by the side of well-broken and well-handled retrievers, to see the modern under-keeper, with very limited knowledge of working birds,

and still more limited experience of good retrievers, hopelessly floundering in a turnip field in charge of a raw though keen and well-bred dog after a strong running bird. He does not lead the dog to the spot where the bird first struck the ground, for this he has not been trained to mark accurately himself; he has no notion of giving him the wind or making a cast; he calls *at* him and not *to* him every few seconds; he tries to get him back by whistle and curse should he at last hit off the scent and carry it to the end of the field; he has no apparent notion of the direction the bird is likely to take in running, and his prevailing feeling appears to be that of a man who has set a power in motion which he is incapable of checking, and of which he does not know the elementary principles. The dog, often born with a magnificent nose, high spirit, and tender mouth, an invaluable combination when trained to perfection, has by this time only two strong characteristics, a desire to *see* the bird instead of scenting it, and an ineradicable fear of his master; fatal conditions, making it absolutely impossible for the latter to extract any value from the splendid qualities of scent, perseverance, and attachment which Nature has bestowed upon the retriever.

It is difficult to suggest a remedy for this, excepting in the directions I have indicated. If your under-

keepers are incapable of breaking or handling a dog, you must try to give them an example of how it should be done, and they will quickly see the advantage of the knowledge, and try to acquire it for themselves. It is surely possible on any estate to reserve outlying portions—they need not be large—which may be devoted to the all-important department of breaking and training your dogs.

Shooting must be done on this ground for the benefit of the dogs and their trainers alone, but no great amount of birds need be killed, and it strikes me that to take part on off days in this wild shooting and dog-breaking would be a pleasant change for any owner or tenant of a good sporting property. More than this, it would probably pay him, for his retrievers would command high prices in the market, and the numbers of birds retrieved from loss and lingering death would go some way in value towards the expense of the department. The dog-breaker, while training his dogs, would bring up and train a boy apprentice, who would, besides doing the dirty work of the kennel, and looking after the dogs in his chief's necessary absences, soon be capable of supplementing his efforts in the field.

You are walking, say, four guns in a line, and to each gun there is a keeper and a retriever. As a rule,

if one dog out of the four is any use you may be thankful, and in case of difficulty this one and his master have to be summoned, often from the opposite end of the line, to help out the hopeless efforts of one of the others. I firmly believe that one man thoroughly up to his work, handling a couple of perfectly trained retrievers, and with another couple in reserve for the time when these are tired, would attend upon a line of even six guns with more success than the divided and incapable efforts one is usually dependent upon. For this purpose the system advocated by Payne-Gallwey, in his 'Letters to Young Shooters,' of giving the beaters light sticks or wands, and obliging them to plant one in the ground at the spot where a bird has fallen, should be adopted.

This brings me to one of the most important and difficult points in walking partridges, the picking up in thick cover. It is simple enough when there is only one bird, or perhaps two, down, and both are stone dead. It is when birds are rising thick and fast, seven or eight are dropped in front of the different guns, one or two more behind, and of these, say, two are evident runners—that the trouble begins. If this takes place at the end of the field there is less difficulty; but when it is in the middle of the field, there are more fresh birds in front

of you, and the turnips are high and thick, the whole organisation usually seems to collapse, the line gets into confusion, the dogs run too far ahead, and put up fresh birds out of range, or the pause is so long that all the broken birds in front of you run gradually to the end, and then get up in a bunch without much execution being done among them.

Now observe how your dog-breaker, assisted by the beaters, trained to mark the fall of the birds and plant sticks, would simplify all this. You would send him first for those that fell behind the line, which he would have marked himself. While he was picking up these, the line would advance slowly to where the fallen birds are in front, and plant the sticks wherever they cannot at once see and pick them up. If, as is likely, more rise and are killed as you advance, they must be marked as well as possible in the same way. The dog-man will have by this time retrieved what fell behind, and will be following close, and seeking wherever sticks are planted. If he comes to the mark of a bird that is a runner, he should leave it till he has gathered all the dead ones, knowing that it must either have run forward, or to one side, on to fresh ground; the line meanwhile advancing to the end. If there is another beat to be taken in the same field, and the runner has not yet been found, he will be on the fresh

ground, and have joined the fresh birds there if possible. You will probably come upon him as you walk this strip, but if you do not the dog-man will take up the search behind you, laying on his dogs at the marked spot where he fell, and whatever pains it may cost to find him, at least the progress of the line will not be delayed, nor the fresh ground disturbed by the search. A winged bird will invariably run away from the line, and almost always down the drill to the fence. The scent of him keeps alive much longer than in the case of a dead bird, so that there is no great reason for hurry. You will also observe that a dog will always hunt closer and more rapidly with no one near him than surrounded by a number of people, of whom several will very likely be carrying dead game, and thereby confusing the scent. The scent of a hare or rabbit is much stronger than that of a partridge, and no dog can be expected to stick true to the scent of the bird, when there are men dragging either of these, freshly killed and bleeding, through the cover, within a few feet of him.

I had the shooting of several thousand acres of very good partridge ground in Perthshire given to me years ago. I took the same eight beaters out every day, and by paying them a little more than the market rate of wages, found no difficulty in getting them

regularly. They soon got to understand the sport, and were keen about it, so I drilled them thoroughly, until it became a pleasure to shoot alongside of them.

One drill, or two feet behind the gun, the line was kept exactly; the next man on the right of a gun marked his first barrel, he on the left his second, and if more rose and were killed, the next two on the right and left took up the marking in succession. The birds, unless plainly to be seen on the ground, were always lifted by a keeper, of whom we had two out, with four dogs; the spot marked was indicated on getting near it by the beater, and under no circumstances was he allowed to advance to the spot itself until after the dog had been laid on, nor to interfere in any way with the search. We hardly ever lost a bird, and there was really no difficulty about the matter at all. The men knew their places in the line, which were never changed, and what they had to do; so long as they stuck to their orders they were sure of their extra pay and a good lunch, and the whole business suited them, and us, very well. We killed 105 brace there on our best day, with four guns, and often fifty or sixty brace with two guns.

Perthshire is in some districts a fine country for partridges, the only drawback to it being the prevalence of stone walls, and alas! barbed wire, which

are naturally not much help to the stock of birds. But in many parts of the Lowlands, as in the north of England, the fringe of the moor or hill ground, lying next to the arable land, affords good protection for nesting; and the extensive cultivation of potatoes provides a class of cover which the birds are very fond of frequenting, and which is a welcome change from the eternal turnips, as birds can run very freely along them. In wheeling in a potato field, I would always recommend that the pivot flank should retrace its steps on the return beat over a portion of the same ground; that is, when you are beating across the drills. You will often find that, owing to the protection of the deep drills, they have crossed back again on to the ground you have beaten.

I would always try to force birds into potatoes rather than turnips, early in the season, while the cover in the former is pretty good, supposing that the management of the beat admits of it. Besides that they are pleasanter walking, birds show better, and are therefore more likely to be well killed, as well as more easily picked up than in turnips. There is always a better scent, and dead birds are more easily seen in a potato field.

The question of finding the birds, in spite of the bare character of the modern stubble, is much more

vital in walking than in driving partridges. In driving the broad line of beaters sweeps the whole country before it, there is a widespread alarm and noise, and but few birds escape being absorbed by this general advance. In walking the breadth of the line corresponds at most only to the width of the field, and though you may send out men, as the German army send out their Uhlans, to spy out the surrounding country, yet these, like that distinguished military force, move only in small bodies, and may miss many odd corners and patches of cover.

Driving also takes place, as a rule, later in the year than the best season for walking; more fields are cleared, the potatoes are all picked, and there are the farmer's men all over the ground, ploughing, cleaning, harrowing, burning weeds, &c. In September walking, just after harvest, you must be prepared to find partridges almost anywhere. They are particularly fond of grass fields, and besides have a habit of basking on the leeside of a thick fence, and sitting particularly close in such a situation. It follows that if your beaters all get through the gap in this sort of fence and then spread out imperfectly over the field, they will often leave whole coveys behind them squatting under the fence they have just come through. As men go round a stretch of several fields to drive it in,

or walk the same ground in line with the guns, they must be taught to beat every fence before getting through it, and after getting through to spread at once right and left, so as to cover the whole field before advancing in line.

On days when there is a stiff breeze, perhaps from the east, with a warm sun, half the birds on a beat will be enjoying the shelter and warmth close under the fences, and unless the ground is carefully beaten, as indicated above, only half the stock will be shown and brought to the guns. I remember Lord Walsingham and myself killing seventy-three brace one day, before five o'clock, on an estate in Yorkshire where thirty to thirty-five brace to three or four guns was the highest previous record. We had to leave off at that hour, with a quantity of broken birds and good cover in front of us, and often have I regretted we were not able to go on till dusk, for we should certainly have made 100 brace of it, which I think would have been a remarkable record for that part of the West Riding.

But on the commonplace lines of beating the ground we should never have done anything like this. I knew every inch of the ground, and had besides the man of all others as a partner who was capable of taking part in breaking a record. The country consisted largely of grass fields and bare stubbles,

there happening to be remarkably few turnips or thick cover of any sort. We beat every fence and every corner of each field—grass and all—*running* round many of them to gain time, and to get the right side of the birds before they were disturbed, and though the total was nothing remarkable, and might be easily doubled in Norfolk, or other better partridge countries, yet it was a good example of what can be done in a very moderate country with no great stock of birds.

The commonplace keeper has what I may be forgiven for calling a 'rooted' idea that turnips are the natural home of the partridge. As a general rule my experience is that partridges are seldom found in turnips, especially swedes, until they have been driven into them, and many a bag is spoilt by the time consumed in laboriously walking such fields without getting more than a chance shot, while the coveys belonging to the ground are sitting quietly in the fallow, stubble, or grass within a hundred yards of you, fields which the keeper does not think worth while beating. They will no doubt resort to white turnips in hot dry weather to dust and feather themselves, especially when the crop is sown broadcast, as there are then certain open spaces here and there about the field, in which, as well as at the edges, you will find traces of their scratching and feathering—but swedes

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they hate, and only go there for shelter when alarmed or hustled. The same may be said of clover, in which crop you will rarely find a bird unless it has been driven there. It must be borne in mind that when, on first attacking your ground in the morning, you find birds in these crops, which they do not frequent because they cannot run comfortably in them, it is possible that they have been disturbed by men working in the fields or crossing by foot-paths. In the afternoon, during feeding-time, it is of course utterly useless to beat turnips unless you have driven birds to them off the stubbles.

A word or two is necessary on the subject of pace in walking. It is, no doubt, a good rule to walk slowly, and when birds are broken all over a turnip field, and lying well, you can hardly go too slowly. But the rule is by no means invariable, and when you enter a fresh field, the birds in which have not as yet been disturbed, and are inclined to keep rising just out of range, while those that do not rise are running from you towards the end, you will get many more shots by going fast than slow. In wheeling also, unless again birds are lying very close, the wheeling flank should get round rapidly. It is a fact that at times you can *run* right on to birds, when you could not walk to them.

Again, it is all-important, as often happens, to push birds forward, and when your whole force has to enter the field by one gateway or gap, the more quietly your right and left wings spread out and the advance begins the better. This must be done in silence, and the whole line will then be behind the birds before they are fully aware of it, and as a natural consequence when they hear the rattle of the advancing force they will strive to get away forward. There are often birds lying to the right or left of the line, not far into the field, and near the side fence. If your spreading out to get into line is done too slowly or noisily, these birds, which will not sit very long after they are aware of danger in the same field, will inevitably rise, and possibly go out over the side fence where you do not wish them to go, before the gun which should advance opposite to them has got to his place. Of course, I am here presuming that you are handling a line of four or six guns, and probably taking a whole field at a time. I would then recommend also that the flank beater should walk say ten or fifteen yards in advance of the rest, to keep the birds towards the forward centre, the point aimed at. This position of the outside beater or gun is an important one, and it is essential that the formation should be as shown on next page, in fig. 11, if it is desired to keep birds by this means away from one side or the other.

If carried out as in fig. 12, the result will never be so good, since it is the outside man who does all the work, and who, creeping ahead next the fence, turns

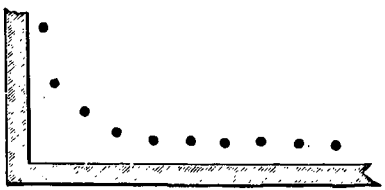

FIG. 11

the birds inwards after they are on the wing, and who is heard by those that have not risen, which consequently make away from the danger. He must keep very close to the fence, and if the flanking

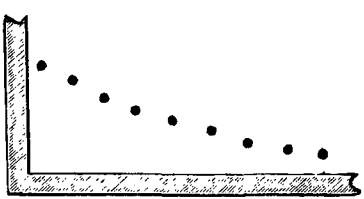

FIG. 12

operation is of vital importance, he should be a 'gun' rather than a beater.

A story is told of the late Sir Henry Stracey, who, being a complete type of a 'British officer and gentle-

man' of the old school, was wont to conduct the shooting at Rackheath, his place in Norfolk, as much as possible on military lines. Calling to his keeper, as they entered a large turnip field full of birds, to halt the line, he announced that he wished this field beaten *en échelon*. 'Very good, Sir Henry,' was the response, and then with his hand to his mouth in stentorian tones the keeper shouted, 'Now, all yew beaters, Sir Henry he dew wish yew to take this here field on the re-ound.'

Whether he knew the superiority of the 're-ound' formation, or merely meant it as the best popular translation into Norfolk language of the word *échelon*, history does not relate. But a line formed on the 're-ound' is most certainly better under almost all circumstances than *en échelon*.[1]

What is called 'half-mooning' is a system of walking up partridges that merits more notice than it seems to receive, and for October shooting ought to be, to my thinking, universally adopted where practicable. But it demands large fields, well-drilled men, and very careful shooters. It used to be carried to great perfection by Lord Leicester, at Holkham in Norfolk, where I fancy it was invented, and where

[1] On referring to the Badminton Library, I am glad to find myself in accord with Lord Walsingham on this point.

I was lucky enough to take part in it on several occasions. Lord Leicester's name has been famous these many years for his consummate skill in the management and organisation of shooting, and certainly when he directed the half-moon it was a most beautifully executed manœuvre, very effective and very simple withal.

I need hardly say that complete discipline must be maintained by both shooters and beaters, as it invariably was at Holkham.

On entering the field, the line of six guns is formed at the base, the spaces between the men being very evenly kept. On a signal from the host, or person directing the operations, who must always be at or near the centre, the two outside men, who must be shooters, begin to advance straight up the field. When they have proceeded say ten yards, another wave of the hand directs the next two to begin moving, and so on until the whole are in motion, none venturing to advance without signal from the commander-in-chief; the centre keeping well back until the last, and often until the outside men have advanced more than half-way up the field. By this time a great many shots will generally have been fired, especially by the flank men, at birds breaking out at the sides. But presently the birds lying in the

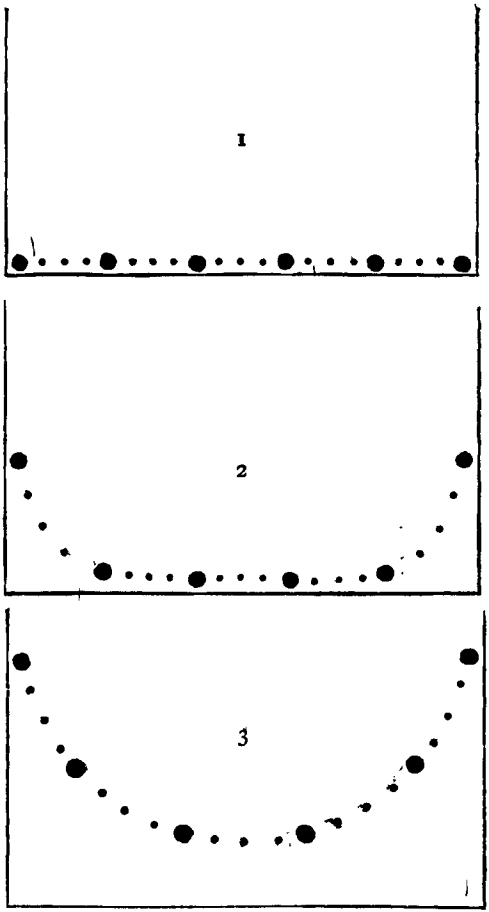

FIG. 13

1. The first formation.
2. The half-moon in process of formation.
3. The half-moon completely formed and in motion

The larger dots represent the guns.

middle of the field, having heard that danger has passed by on each outside, and gone beyond them, will, when they rise, begin to turn in and fly back over the centre and other guns. Then comes the trial of patience and careful shooting. The bird which rises at your feet, if you are, say, No. 4 or 5, tempting as he is, you must not fire at, for he flies straight for the head of No. 2 gun, and so on till the end of the field. It need hardly be added that the swinging curling shots afforded by the birds coming back are most difficult, and therefore enjoyable when successfully dealt with, and it is wonderful to see a covey rise inside the magic half-circle, and at once come back straight over the centre or sides.

It must be borne in mind that partridges, being very close to the ground, are very sensitive to sound, and they hear the rattle of a man's feet very quickly as it comes to them *under* the turnip leaves. It is this which causes them to turn back. They have probably not seen the outside men, but they have heard their tread as they passed by, and may even have seen their feet as they look along the drills (for half-mooning should always be done across the drills where possible). The centre, lying far back and not having yet moved much, the birds have not become aware of, and so knowing that danger has passed by

and gone beyond them, they think to sneak back and be safe. Thus many which would be quite unapproachable by an ordinary straight line of guns, afford instead beautiful overhead shots. You never seem to get a great deal of shooting, yet it is wonderful how the total mounts up, for some of the guns, according to luck, get shooting in every field, however wild the birds may be.

Half-mooning with a more extended line, and embracing a large stretch of country at a time, also answers very well, but the spacing is naturally much more difficult to keep, as the intersecting fences hide one part of the line from the other. It is then well for the men to carry flags, but more will depend upon the discipline and intelligence displayed by the shooters. Those in the centre *must* allow time for the flanks to get forward, and each gun must keep touch with his right and left hand neighbours, pausing for them if they have to stop to pick up or get through a fence, and quickening or slackening his pace according to that of the flank outside him.

In this way birds may be pushed off a large tract of country on to any heath or desirable piece of cover, while during the operation many wild pretty shots will relieve the monotony of walking.

I remember once, when out alone with Lord

Walsingham at his place, Merton in Norfolk, probably the best shooting property for its size in England, we were walking up a narrow and rather bare field of swedes. A covey rose wild, a long way in front, and out of shot of him, and for what reason I know not, for there was no half-moon, they turned and came back over my head at a good pace. I was luckly enough to kill a right and left, not very difficult, but satisfactory overhead shots. Poor old Buckle, the famous keeper so lovingly remembered in the Badminton Library, and by every one who ever shot at Merton, was toiling along some twenty yards behind me. He had years before been shot in the stomach by a poacher, and always went 'a bit short.' As the two dead birds came clattering down by him, and he turned to pick them up, he said to me: 'Well, that's a thing I couldn't ever do so long as I've lived, and I dessay I've seen a deal more shooting than you have, too.' So, no doubt, he had, and from a privileged person of his experience a remark in the nature of a compliment was nothing but gratifying.

The hints, suggestions or descriptions, I have ventured to give so far on walking up partridges, have been, as I said, mainly addressed to those who shoot in organised parties on well-preserved estates. But I must not neglect my friend B., of whom I spoke above,

and whose opportunities are neither so great nor so frequent. Many pleasant days have I had with men of the B. stamp—and much of the groundwork of partridge-shooting did I learn from them.' Now, in return I must, while thanking them for what they taught me, urge upon them that most of the improvements in the art of managing partridges on closely preserved estates include lessons which they, on smaller properties, and with less expense, can learn to follow on a smaller scale. The half-moon principle, for instance, can and should be carried out in miniature by a party of, say, four or five persons, all told. In approaching birds under these conditions, and on ground where the boundary must be made a constant study, it is of vital importance that somebody should be between the birds and the dangerous quarter *before they rise.* When your party consists of, say, two guns and three beaters or keepers, I can conceive very few circumstances under which you should move in a straight line. One must be prepared to run while the other stands still; one to be forward while the other keeps back. It is a game of working well together, and though probably one will always be the host and manager and the other the guest or subordinate in theory, they must in practice consider each other equally, and give way as circumstances arise.

For this class of shooting I think pointers are most useful; still more so for the man who likes to go out single-handed and kill his eight or ten brace of birds, accompanied only by one man to carry game, ammunition and refreshment. It is essential under these circumstances not to blunder on to the birds unexpectedly, and so probably drive them in the wrong direction. It is a very pretty manœuvre, and one requiring all the qualities of the true sportsman, to get round a covey of birds lying fairly near the boundary fence, work yourself in between them and the enemy's territory and put them back into the centre of your own ground. To do this it is essential to know where they are lying in the first instance, and you cannot do better than employ a steady pointer for this purpose.

I would go farther than this, and recommend pointers or setters for the class of shooting I mentioned having had in Perthshire—two or three guns and about eight men—in short, what may be described as the average or popular form of partridge-shooting. I well recollect the dismay with which, in spite of considerable keenness and activity, we used to survey a thirty-acre field of turnips as high as your waist, and into which we had driven, say, only two coveys and a brace of odd birds. To beat the field properly would

take an hour's hard walking, possibly in a hot sun, or worse still, in pouring rain—and the prospect only three or four brace at most to the bag. Then again, with a narrow line—for you must walk pretty close in the thick cover—in a field of this size the birds would often run completely round you, and I have seen the whole of such a field beaten without even flushing the birds which were undoubtedly in it.

Now, here a good pointer is invaluable. I would not recommend working a brace at the same time, for it is not here as with grouse, where very wide range is desirable, and the eventual flight of the birds is of no moment. This is a close matter of working the birds in the direction you want, and if you had two points at the same time you would run the risk of spoiling the one while dealing with the other. But your single steady dog would show you the whereabouts of the birds, save you much time and laborious walking, while it would enable you to approach them from the side most desirable, according to your ground.

It has often struck me as lamentable that in small, or shall I say average, partridge-shooting the pointer should no longer be employed, because, forsooth, he has become unnecessary to the large and carefully organised parties which have to deal with

large quantities of birds on a practically unlimited extent of ground.

I have purposely dwelt on this point, because I have been accused of being an absolute partisan of exclusive driving, and of a consequent contempt for this class of shooting. I must claim a more catholic disposition, and a genuine sympathy, founded on experience, with the beautiful art of making a bag of partridges, practised by those who have a genuine love of sport, but have not the advantages of the great landowner or millionaire. This consists so far as one can sum it up, and granted that you as well as those with you are both active and keen, in so managing your birds that you push them in the first instance in the required direction and deal with them in detail afterwards. To do this you must neglect no cover, open ground, or hedgerow ; you must vary your pace and positions, circumvent, lie in wait for, or drive rapidly on to your birds as circumstances arise, and above all there must be complete harmony and absence of jealousy between you, your colleagues in sport, and your assistants. While you are young, and your game-book as yet contains many blank pages, you will assuredly keep a score of your kills, whether I or anyone else dissuade you or not. But be honest to yourself in this, and remember that the only value your score

can have is to show that you have made the most of your opportunities without interfering with your neighbours.

Some mention must be made, in a work of this kind, of the method of shooting partridges with the aid of an artificial kite. I cannot say much in favour of it, although I think that the objection most frequently urged against it—viz. that it drives birds off your ground—does not, except on very small properties or shootings, carry much weight. But as we are now discussing the small and unpretentious manor with our friend B., who is the most likely person to make use of it, I would venture to point out one or two other things.

That it gives very poor, poking shots, and is a strictly pot-hunting class of sport, nobody can deny; but the excuse generally pleaded for it, that when cover is scarce and an organised drive may be, from lack of men or means, impracticable, birds cannot be got at any other way, is, to my thinking, inadmissible.

There is no prettier art than driving partridges to one or two guns, with only three or four drivers; and any one who has experienced the pride one feels in taking home fifteen brace of birds secured in this way on ground circumscribed in area and not too plentifully stocked, will agree with me that this is the way

EXTING

to kill them under the above conditions. Success depends entirely on intimate knowledge of the ground, the whereabouts of the coveys, and their probable or usual line of flight; but *with* this knowledge, and straight shooting, you may kill all you want to on any ground, however bare and limited, so long as it is not blowing a gale of wind.

But if you must secure birds for the pot, and do not mind easy slow shots out of hedgerows, then try the kite. The important thing to bear in mind is that the kite-flyer, if he walks in front of you, is likely to be in your way when the birds rise; therefore, instruct him to walk rather behind you while he flies the kite in front of you.

I have seen it used with good effect in shootings on a larger scale, notably at Merton, as a flank protection, to keep birds on a Norfolk heath; but I believe even here it has been found unnecessary, and in most cases has been abandoned. It makes the birds sit so close that when the heath is driven, many would be passed by the drivers, though it undoubtedly prevents their breaking out on the side where it is being flown.

Another essential to shooting partridges really well is to be ever ready, for the partridge that rises thirty-five yards off in breezy weather, though quite realisable,

must be dealt with at once. To shoot properly you must study your walking, and train yourself to the habit, which becomes eventually second nature, of surveying the ground just in front of you before you put your feet down. If you are stumbling over turnips or treading indiscriminately among the drills, you will miss many shots, for the partridge is up and off like a firework without your knowing where the fuse is lighted that sets him off. Study the possibilities of a shot when getting over a fence, and so order your going that without danger to others you are always ready.

In conclusion, if possible, let no one be of your party who is not keen and ready to abide by orders. If he does not care to help towards making a good bag, and to do exactly what you tell him, you are better without him.

CHAPTER V

GROUND, STOCK, AND POACHING

POPULAR as pheasant-shooting undoubtedly is, and great as are the improvements in this branch of sport which the present generation has witnessed, whether in the science of rearing the stock, or of realising from it in a workmanlike manner, yet if you were to poll the shooting men of Great Britain at the present day, you would assuredly find that the great majority would rather have a good day at partridges than pheasants. The partridge is the popular bird, not only of to-day, but also of the future.

It is, therefore, worth while to enquire whether owners, sporting tenants, and keepers have studied and improved their methods of producing and preserving partridges to the point required by the undoubted demand for this branch of sport.

I should say, without hesitation, that for the most part they have not; and if I offend or surprise the shooting world by some of the remarks I propose to

make, I beg them to believe me sincere, and anxious only, in the interests of all sportsmen, to publish what I conceive to be the true deductions from a long experience of various manors, large and small, plentifully stocked, and the reverse.

I will start by saying that most English manors have not anything like the stock of partridges which they ought to produce. This I attribute to three causes. First, the keeper's work is not, so far as partridges are concerned, well understood or properly carried out. Second, which is a result in part of the first, there is a good deal more egg-stealing and poaching than there should be. Third, the stock, being low, is too much reduced by hard shooting.

Norfolk, Suffolk, and Cambridgeshire are, without doubt, the pick of the English counties for game, yet in 1887, every one was electrified to hear that all the records of these counties had been beaten in Hampshire! Had it been Yorkshire or Essex, or say Nottinghamshire or Northamptonshire, many would have wondered, but have recollected that in these counties there have always been the traditions of great 'shikar.' But Hampshire seemed incredible. A few, who had years before noted the good soil and the improving totals of this county, were not so much surprised, but to the majority of the world it was

inexplicable. Holkham, Elvedon, Merton, and Six-Mile Bottom could not have had their records lowered without wholesale buying of eggs and artificial rearing of birds. Agriculture had doubtless been sacrificed, and nets, wire, kites, and other illegitimate means been used galore to produce such a result in a second-class game county. The thing could not have been done by fair shooting in the open fields.

All these things were said at the time; yet none of them were true, and the marvellous record made at The Grange in 1887, of which fuller particulars will be found on a later page,[1] was achieved under the fairest possible conditions, and on ordinary agricultural land producing a more than average rent to its owner. What, then, was the explanation? And how is it that the same estate has, during the past three years, again proved itself capable of producing the two biggest weeks' partridge-driving in England?

The answer is, undoubtedly, good keepering, good management, and a good understanding all round between owner, keepers, farmers, and labourers.

It would be neither politic nor convincing, in a work intended to appeal to all classes of sporting readers, to extol unduly a particular place or keeper,

[1] See p. 227.

merely because one had enjoyed the hospitality of the one, or admired the skill of the other. Yet it would be unfair not to award the palm where it is due, and the results above mentioned are so largely due to the talents and knowledge of Marlowe, Lord Ashburton's head keeper at The Grange, that I must place him first among all the keepers I have ever seen, for producing a fine stock of partridges, as well as for managing and realising from them when produced.

I must mention two others who run him hard for ability and partridge management: Jackson, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales' keeper at Sandringham, and Robbins, for many years in Lord Londesborough's service at Selby, in Yorkshire. I am, no doubt, leaving out others with great claims to be named and recorded, there being, for instance, half-a-dozen men on the famous manors of Cambridgeshire, within a few miles of Newmarket, and another half-a-dozen in Norfolk, who have consummate knowledge of the subject; but I cannot pretend to adjust exactly the comparative merits of all the good keepers in England.

I revert to the results at The Grange, because they make a very remarkable test case. The late Lord Ashburton, in whose service Marlowe had been for many years on the well-known estate of Buckenham,

in Norfolk, undoubtedly, when he took him to Hampshire, provided for him exceptionally advantageous conditions. The estate was in magnificent order, a large capital having been sunk in it, the relations between landlord and tenant were, owing to the munificence of the former, of the most friendly order, the labourers were contented, and everything was, as it still is under his son, the present owner, most favourable to the preservation of game. Many other wealthy and liberal landlords exist, I am happy to say, in England, yet we have all seen these conditions without the corresponding results, so far as partridges are concerned, even where the owner is keen enough for a large stock and high-class shooting.

The high average maintained at The Grange is due to a combination of the above conditions and the system on which the keepers' work is conducted; and it is here that I think a lesson may be learned by other owners and keepers. First and foremost the latter are taught to treat partridges, and not pheasants, as the first consideration. Here lies the vital point. Partridges require a better and more watchful keeper than pheasants, and if you wish for the former as your principal and most attractive sport, the old-fashioned system of leaving them to take care of themselves in the nesting season, while

your keepers are devoting themselves exclusively to the pheasantry and the coops, must be abandoned. You may arrange to divide the work as you please, and a great deal may be done for your young pheasants by the keepers' wives, and by others. The pheasants and other game under Marlowe are by no means scarce, big bags being made in the covers at The Grange; but the partridges are the principal object of care and attention.

Everything must be done to watch and thwart egg-stealers and poachers. To arrive at this it follows that the whereabouts of every, or nearly every, nest must be known, and these must be watched and visited practically every day. An under-keeper at The Grange is expected to know how many partridge nests he has, and exactly where they are; moreover, if any disappear, he is required to know how, where, and when they ceased to exist. The head man is quite likely to turn up unexpectedly on the beat at 4 A.M. on a May morning, and require to be taken round by his under-keeper and shown the actual nests which he has reported to exist on his beat. The destruction of vermin must be very closely attended to, especially where the fences are, as in Hampshire, very big and thick, and form the main nesting-ground of the birds.

While on this branch of the subject, it may be well to remark that partridges and their nests are safer in fences or banks that are not too thick. In looser covert the vermin are more easily traced and trapped, and cannot so easily steal unawares upon the birds. If making artificial covert for birds to nest in, dry banks with rough grass, patches of whin or broom and with only occasional trees, are preferable to very thick fences or belts of trees closely planted together. In proof of this, where such exist you will always find the nests close to the edge of the strip or fence, where the shelter is not too thick and the birds are not exposed to the drip from the trees.

Foxes are a great difficulty, but I am convinced that with modern appliances and close care the neighbouring M.F.H. need never be disappointed while a good stock of partridges is maintained. There must be a complete check upon the whereabouts and well-being of the nests. Egg-stealing is very profitable, and unless the head-keeper is trustworthy and very watchful, labourers and tramps may not prove to be the only persons engaged in the illicit traffic. I fear that many a young keeper falls a victim to the temptation of the diabolical agents of those who advertise '20,000 partridges' eggs for sale.' In most cases

these are all stolen, and the traffic should never be encouraged by true sportsmen.

Norfolk and Suffolk have been the principal hunting grounds of these people in the last few years, and I do not hesitate to say that these counties are most terribly 'egged.' I remember a few years ago, having to wait some time for a train at Thetford, I had a long conversation with the stationmaster on this and kindred subjects. 'Ah, sir,' he said, 'it would break any gentleman's heart who is fond of shooting to see the scores of boxes of eggs that go through this station in April and May. I know what they are, but I have to put them in and forward them ; I have no power to prevent it.'

This is a very lamentable state of things, but it will never be remedied until there is better and more powerful combination among owners, sporting tenants, and shooting men of every degree. There is, I believe, a society called the Field Sports Protection Association, but it has as yet achieved no very remarkable results, though there are a few well-known names on its list. But an idea of its management may be gathered from the simple fact that two out of every three shooting men you meet have never heard of its existence or been asked to support it.

What is wanted is a much more powerful federa-

tion or league, whose arm should be long enough and strong enough to reach those who deal in poached game and stolen eggs, and which should unceasingly watch the interests of the game question in Parliament.

If only one-fourth of the men in this country who care about shooting, and wish to see sport kept up, would subscribe half-a-guinea per annum to such a league, enough funds would be provided to maintain an effective and organised campaign against egg-stealers, poachers, and illegal destroyers of game. Detectives of experience could be selected, who should at the proper seasons proceed to the suspected districts, trace the sources of the supply of eggs, and of the illegally killed partridges and grouse which come into the market before the season opens, and where evidence was complete institute prosecutions against all concerned in this nefarious trade.

To do this properly, however, the sale of game eggs should be made illegal. How can a man with only a few acres in the near neighbourhood of London procure all the partridge eggs which he advertises for sale unless they are stolen? No gentleman would sell his eggs to such a person, but it is a regrettable fact that many will buy from him. Eggs should only be bought from owners of sporting property. If you

advertised that you were prepared to give a fair price for them, enough would always be forthcoming from genuine persons to enable you to make the required addition to your stock. Many a man has paid 5*l.* a hundred for his own eggs stolen from his own preserves. The only remark to be made on this is that it serves him right. It proves that he has not the wit to check his own keepers, and that he is absolutely unscrupulous as to what happens to his neighbour's property.

Scores upon scores of hampers, or more usually boxes, of partridges and grouse reach London long before the legal hours of possession and sale on August 12 and September 1. A proper enquiry as to where these come from, and to whom they are consigned, would vastly open the eyes of some owners of game estates. All these birds are stolen or poached, just as those sold out of season as Hungarian or Russian partridges and Norwegian black game are for the most part stolen, poached, or illegally killed on British ground.

One reason why I have dwelt on the totals of The Grange is to point it out as a typical large estate where the result is in great part due to the fact that these practices do not exist there. I have no right to say or think that they do on the estates immediately marching with it, but it is certain that on absolutely identical soil and nature of ground in the same county

and climate nothing like the same amount of partridges are to be found.

Now here we see the advantage of a standard to go by. It has been proved conclusively on a particular estate that a certain large number of birds can be produced and a certain average maintained through good and bad seasons, rising to a very high total in exceptionally favourable years. Remove Lord Ashburton, Marlowe, and the system, and the totals would probably sink in a couple of years to those of the average Hampshire estate; whilst under the new *régime* it would be said that it was not after all a first-rate game soil—which it is not—and that so many brace, giving an average sort of total, was all that could be expected from it.

The same might be said of Holkham, Merton, Elvedon, Londesborough, or a few more really well-managed estates. In these places there is a proper standard to go by, and were the stock to fall too low, the owners would know, and all those in the habit of shooting there would know, that there was something wrong.

But if the owner of a property, large or small, does not know, and has never taken any pains to test, in the ways I have described, what amount of stock can be produced on the ground, what can he expect?

This is not a wholesale accusation of English keepers, for often—I may say usually—there is no connivance on their part with poaching or robbery. But the average preservation of partridges has not kept pace with the increased numbers and advantages of the poacher, the egg-stealer, and the egg or game dealer. The indifference of the latter as to the source whence he procures his wares is sad, but hardly a crime. But the calm neglect with which the nests and eggs of partridges are treated in the nesting season, and the birds themselves during the shooting months, is, from a good partridge-keeper's point of view, so culpable as to become almost criminal. A very little bushing, and that only in the grass-fields, appears in many places to be all that is thought necessary to preserve partridges. Often in such places you would find on enquiry that there is a deadly and perennial feud between the keepers on one side and the farmers and labourers on the other.

What on earth can be expected under such conditions? Naturally, the stock of birds is almost always below the proper mark, and the owner is constantly disappointed. He finds that, however favourable the season, he can never get the bag that in spite of his neglect he is always hoping for. The birds and eggs are left, while the keepers are busy all

day with pheasant-coops, seldom showing their noses far from the main coverts, an easy prey to mowing-machines, vermin, dogs, and human depredators, who, either from hostility to the owner and his keepers or from greed of gain, make it certain that he cannot realise anything like the number of birds which his property should produce.

The scope of this work does not admit of my giving every technical detail of the means for rearing, protecting, and preserving game, and, in fact, this has been so well and exhaustively done by others that it would be unnecessary. But whether you dally over the graceful pages of Richard Jefferies, 'The Amateur Poacher,' or search through the mass of practical detail provided by such experienced men as Lord Walsingham, Sir Ralph Payne-Gallwey, Carnegie,[1] or others, you will find them all agreed upon one point. The farmers and farm labourers must be made your friends, or they will assuredly be your most formidable enemies.

On the average estate, where the pheasant and partridge shooting are of about equal value, and still more on a property where it is intended to make partridges the principal consideration, I would strongly

[1] *Practical Game Preserving*, by William Carnegie.

recommend a division of the functions of the head-keeper. There should be a partridge-keeper and a pheasant-keeper, each with his staff under him, and entirely independent of the other. In all probability it would be found that the partridge-keeper would require the larger staff of the two, since all small spinneys and copses, and even small outlying woods, would come under his supervision; the attentions of the pheasant-keeper being confined to the two or three main coverts where pheasants are to be reared. This is a system I have advocated for years past, and since beginning this work I have heard that it has been adopted in two or three places with very satisfactory results.

To arrive at the proper point of good relations with the farmers and labourers, it is necessary that a keeper should be always about in the fields, and, besides having an exact knowledge of the routine of the farm work and in what field the labourers are employed on any particular day, he must also have the opportunity of making friends with them, of inspiring them with a desire to help him in his vocation, of studying their interests and individualities and reporting them to his master, and of watching and checking any instance of dishonesty or poaching that may occur among them.

If, on a certain day in June, all his sitting hens have to be looked to, his food mixed, a number of his coops to be shifted, or any other of the absorbing duties connected with pheasant-rearing occupy all his hours, how can he get to where the large meadow is being cut with the machine, and where all the farm hands, reinforced by half a dozen strangers—probably roving Irish or gipsies, and little better than common tramps—are running riot over the hay-making?

How can he keep his eye upon the encampment of that ubiquitous tribe on the little bit of rough commonland close to his best partridge ground, whence they will mark every nest in their vicinity, and man, woman, and child exert all their well-known ingenuity and experience to have the eggs out of those nests?

There may be eight partridge nests on one thick hedgerow, which in a good year will produce from forty to fifty brace of birds belonging to that field alone; but how is he to protect these from foxes, weasels, or dishonest human beings, when it takes him all his time to keep his young pheasants from the same dangers, supplemented by those of dogs, cats, rats, jays, magpies, and hawks in and around the woods where he is responsible for the rearing?

Later in the year, does not the dishonest farm

labourer know the keeper's regular hours of feeding in the woods, which leave him free to set and watch a steel trap in the turnips, or stealthily to pull up and remove the bushes in one or two fields he knows of where coveys roost, spots which his very good friends with whom he drinks at the lonely alehouse on the cross roads propose to visit with their nets, in a night or two, when the moon is down, the clouds drive dark and low, and a rising south-westerly breeze, whistling over the stubble and grass, drowns the sound of their footsteps?

This little alehouse, the robbers' cave of the locality, can be very easily overlooked with its incomings and outgoings in the week before the First, from the little spinney on the opposite slope, peeping unobserved through the hazel boughs, the watcher having crept there unseen down the hollow lane behind; the intended theatre of the poachers' operations may then be arrived at with tolerable certainty, keepers' forces mustered, and a warm reception given the rascals at night, with the triumph of capturing their net and hanging it up as a trophy on the beams of the old keeper's gun-room at the Hall. But how is all this to be carried out and the precious coveys saved if the keeper has to be shifting his pheasant coops for the last time in the sunny

meadow which has no outlook between the two big woods?

How, in short, can a keeper look after the pheasants and partridges at the same time, and do justice to both? They are very distinct and different functions, and I wish, leaving ground game out of consideration—which, since the passing of that dishonest measure known as the Hares and Rabbits Act, is a mere matter of money or arrangement—to emphasise the fact that it is in the open fields, in connection with partridge management, that a keeper finds the key to the preservation of game, and the occasion of establishing cordial relations with farmers and labourers, and of enlisting them on the side of law and order, peace, plenty, and partridges.

The netting of partridges I have alluded to above, meaning thereby the usual method of dragging a net (which is more destructive as well as more easily carried when made of silk) across the field where birds roost at night, and so dropping it over the covey. The whereabouts of such a net, especially if of silk, should not be difficult to trace anywhere in the neighbourhood if keepers are well up to their work. In the colliery districts, where keepers are *obliged* to look very closely after their ground, and where, besides doing a certain amount of detec-

tive work themselves, they have to maintain cordial and constant relations with the police, they generally know pretty accurately where every long net, the kind most used for rabbits, is kept. This knowledge is essential in those parts to enable them to watch and break up the big gangs of poachers, who would otherwise strip them of every head of game. They are, however, exposed to the visits of strange gangs from a distance, who will sometimes have travelled fifty miles by train to visit some particular preserves in a locality where they are not known.

In all districts, however good the keepers, there is danger from the visits of such strangers. The only material protection is exhaustive bushing, but the real remedy lies in knowing the owners of the nets and their movements. Bushing must not be confined to grass fields only, as partridges often roost on stubble or fallow, and it must be thoroughly done, the bushes of thorn not too few and far between, and so stuck in as to be almost prone upon the ground rather than upright.

The tunnel-net is, so far as I know, obsolete, but a quaint description of the method of using it is given below.[1] The account is remarkable, as is also the

[1] 'Tunnelling partridges is a most destructive method; it cannot be so well practised in an enclosed country, from the

POACHING WITH STEEL TRAP

extract from the 'Gentleman's Recreation,' previously quoted above in the chapter on Driving, for the knowledge shown by these old-time sportsmen and poachers of the use that may be made of the running rather than the flying instinct of the partridge, a point not half enough studied or utilised.

This instinct may and should be largely taken advantage of in managing pheasants, but except in half-mooning I do not know that it is ever turned to account with partridges.

The ubiquitous watchfulness necessary to a partridge-keeper must be employed against the setting of snares, which, as it can only be successfully done on banks or at the edges of fields where the birds pretty regularly dust themselves, ought to be easily detected and frustrated. Killing partridges by steel traps is

hedges darkening the moon's light, when the partridges will drive no farther, but instantly fly; the poachers, however, spring them in the evening with a spaniel, and mark the spot by a stick and piece of white paper; the tunnel is then set down on the spot where the birds jucked from, and to which they are certain to return, they thus readily find and drive them with a horse under the net. To prevent this, take some partridges from the outskirts of the manors, cut off the *bearing claws*, and turn them out; they cannot then *run*, and always spring; if one bird springs, the rest of the covey are also sure to rise; this plan is perhaps the best for defeating the havock made by the tunnel-net; the *poachers* themselves term it *taking an unfair advantage of them.*'—Daniell's *Rural Sports*, vol. ii. p. 407.

though fairly destructive not too common, and, as it demands more care to watch and detect, merits a short description.

It is almost always practised by men employed to work in the fields, whether regular farm hands or 'casuals.' Having observed a convenient bare place in a turnip field, usually in white turnips sown broadcast, an ordinary rabbit-trap or gin, easily carried in the pocket, is set, slightly sprinkled with mould. A few grains of corn are then scattered on and around it. All this is done while crossing the field and passing near the spot in the ordinary course of the day's work. The trapper may then lie under the hedge and watch, but he need not even do this if at work close by; for on a bird being caught, the snap of the trap and fluttering of the prisoner will cause the rest of the covey to rise alarmed, and give him warning that he has taken a prize. To saunter carelessly by and put trap and bird in his pocket is very simple, and it can be easily reset in another part of the field. A good many brace are made away with in this manner, where the keeper does not have a watchful eye for what is going on on the land.

Practical protection of nests from foxes and other vermin is strangely neglected. A single strand of wire about ten inches above the ground, stretched

from stout pegs, will deter almost any fox from crossing. Where, as is often the case, there are four or five, or perhaps even a dozen, nests along one hedgerow or belt, so simple and cheap a form of protection is surely worth trying. The wire can then be stretched all along the fence a foot or two below the nests, and on both sides if necessary.

A more elaborate affair is a frame made of wire netting of the same pattern as the ordinary rabbit netting, but with a five or six inch mesh, made of a circular form, in shape like a round dish cover, and about three feet six inches in diameter. The fox cannot or will not get through the meshes, nor reach his paw through to the nest, which is, of course, in the centre of the frame, while the sitting partridge will creep through the meshes and not disturb herself in her incubations.[1]

These have been tried with very successful results on the Duke of Rutland's Belvoir estate, another property where the stock of partridges had, under the old system, fallen to nothing, but which has now, under different management, begun to yield very good bags.

[1] The only drawback to this invention is that the wire frames may too easily indicate the position of nests to egg-stealers or poachers. The ground must, therefore, where these are used be watched with extra care.

I must now revert to the third cause to which I attribute the much smaller numbers of partridges than should be found on most manors—too hard shooting. The practice of walking the ground and killing all you can, and of driving it and doing the same thing afterwards, alluded to above, is in many places the reason why birds become scarce, and I must again urge that the practice cannot be too severely condemned. It must be remembered that the standard of shooting is much higher than formerly. Although you will meet many young men who have neither the desire to study, nor the qualities to master, the art and craft of true sportsmanship, yet you will find that, as a rule, they shoot up to a certain average. Three or four of these gentlemen walking in line, each with a practised loader and a pair of first-rate guns, having ejectors to accelerate re-charging, and the best possible cartridges, will make undeniable havoc among the coveys; and though they may probably not often pick out the old birds, will operate with deadly success upon the young ones, in both cases producing the most destructive effect possible upon your stock of birds. If after this the ground is driven as well, the stock likely to be left will be very small, and, what is worse, will consist mainly of old birds. A very scanty supply in the ensuing season will

be the result. Yet in many places the shooting goes on exactly the same in good and bad seasons, without regard to the amount of stock on the ground.

The question whether a large or only moderate stock should be left on the land is one which has divided the best authorities. In my humble opinion, there is no doubt that the verdict should be given in favour of maintaining always a large stock. I base this upon what I have actually seen on different estates, having noted that on those where the biggest bags are consistently made the ground is shot over lightly—practically only once in the season—everything, however, being done on that one occasion to realise heavily.

I do not wish, not being fortunate enough to possess an estate of my own, to lay down the law on this point, especially as I have found a difference of opinion between two such undeniable authorities as Lord Walsingham [1] and Marlowe, the latter holding that you can hardly leave too large a stock. I quite agree that the moment disease appears you cannot do better than follow the example of Lord Leicester, and kill off every bird on the diseased ground. But the kind of disease here alluded to is rare, and has nothing to do with the ordinary malady of gapes,

[1] Badminton Library, *Shooting*, vol. i. p. 155.

which destroys so many young birds, even in good breeding seasons.

But the prevalence of the latter pest, and the many dangers of all sorts, the worst being the frequent recurrence of cold, wet weather in June, which make a stock of partridges so delicate and uncertain a quantity, seem to me to outweigh altogether the possibility of birds being a trifle close upon the ground in the nesting season, and the consequent inroads of the older birds upon the incubations of the younger. The latter undoubted evil is better provided against by driving the birds rather than walking them up, and by a judicious thinning of the old cocks at the commencement of the pairing season, a necessary practice not half enough resorted to.

Partridges will not grow out of stones, and if after killing them close a bad hatching season succeeds, you will have nothing to shoot at all, unless you draw birds from your neighbour's land, which is not a desirable state of things.

To sum up, on a large majority of properties very little is done to protect and preserve the partridge, the most desired and appreciated of all game birds, causing the stock to fall below its proper mark, while, notwithstanding this shortcoming, many owners year after year—either from recklessness or want of know-

ledge, or sometimes from an envious desire to rival the totals of better managed estates—relentlessly pursue the already diminished stock to the death, trusting to the chapter of accidents and the futile idea that one good breeding season will set matters right.

When the one good breeding season does come, their careless management leaves them quite unprepared to cope with the conspiracy between poachers, egg or game dealers, and dishonest keepers, which I regret to have to say widens and deepens every year.

The improvement or enlargement of the natural nesting cover by means of belts, or banks sown with broom and gorse and wired in, is a simple means of helping the stock of birds not half enough attempted. Where money is no object, artificial banks should be thrown up, especially in low-lying, flat country, to give the birds the chance of protecting their nests from heavy wet, and of leading their broods on to the slope of the bank, out of the danger of furrows or ruts full of water, which are to the young chicks as great rivers and pools, in which they are easily drowned. I heard last year of six young partridges being found drowned in the huge print of a cart-horse's hoof, after a heavy thunder shower. Such banks should be left bare, except for a little seed of broom and gorse, and

not allowed to grow too thick, and, unless wired in, the young broom—which is the best cover of all for partridges—will be eaten by rabbits and hares, while the cover itself will be too easily hunted by foxes. These will not be entirely kept out by wire netting after it has been up a year or two, but they will always be loth to trust themselves much inside it, and any little alteration, such as an extra strand of wire along the top, will make them suspicious of a trap, and, in all likelihood, keep them out altogether.

Banks or belts of this description are, I think, better than fir-belts, though they do not afford such pretty shooting when birds are driven over them. If the neighbouring fences do not answer for driving, artificial stands of hurdles can be placed in the belt. These hurdle-stands should always be made either of two hurdles set at about a right angle, the point towards the drive, or of three hurdles, forming a three-sided shelter. When made of only one hurdle, the birds coming right and left of you catch sight of you, and swerve or turn back altogether.

Again, if expense need not be considered, I would go much farther than the making of these belts or banks, and have one or more sanctuaries or partridge preserves in the centre of the ground. I cannot understand why this idea is not more adopted where

No. 1.

The plan shows preserve for breeding partridges, and boxes for shooting, numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, &c. It is situated in the midst of large fields, and surrounded by a natural thorn fence. Roughly speaking, it is 500 yards long by 110 wide.

'A' marks the site of a tall tree which serves as a good landmark for the beaters.

'B' marks an artificial pool, where a constant supply of water is kept in the summer.

The shading indicates cover for the birds formed by privet, box, and yew—also artichokes.

The shading shows cultivated portion, which is sown with buckwheat, mustard, and barley.

The boxes, 1, 2, 3, &c., are formed of growing fir.

The driving to the preserves may be by a circle (the Hungarian method) or by half-circle, bringing up beaters in two divisions.

FIG. 14 *Scale* 18 *in. to one mile*

PLAN OF PARTRIDGE PRESERVES, LAID OUT IN 1892, ON THE ESTATE OF H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES AT SANDRINGHAM

partridges are the main desideratum. I append the ground-plans and description of two such preserves, made last year at Sandringham, and furnished by Jackson, the head keeper, which I am able to reproduce and publish in this volume by the gracious permission of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales.

These could not, I think, be improved upon, the only criticism I could make being that the centre ride in No. 2 preserve does not appear to have any practical value, and might, one would imagine, be more usefully employed as cover or crop. Whether or not they would answer better if wired in cannot as yet be said, as, up to the moment of writing, the results of the first season after laying them out are not to hand.

There is one more point with regard to stock which must not be omitted. I mean the insane and much too common practice of killing down the game near the boundary. This jealousy or mistrust of your neighbour defeats itself. If the land on your boundary is favourable to birds, it will draw them from your own centre as fast as you kill them off. If it is not, constant pursuit will the more readily drive those which you do not kill on to your neighbour's centre. The boundary beats of your property should be carefully preserved, and lie very quiet, though there

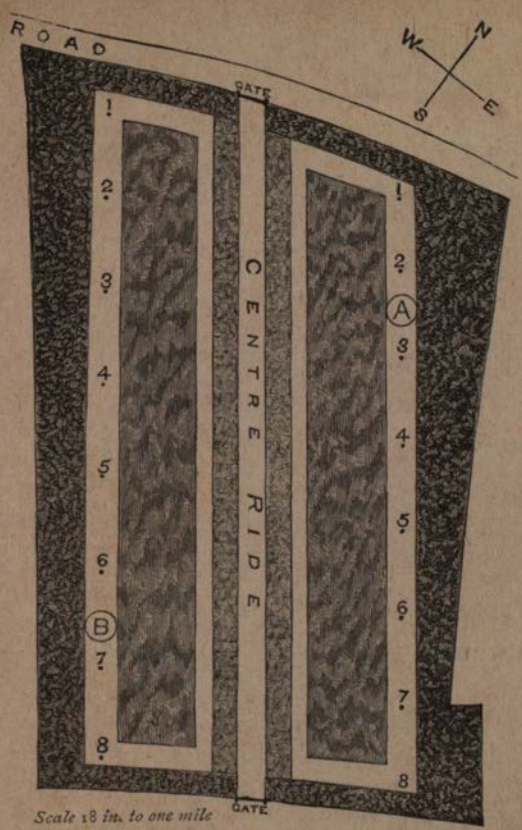

FIG. 15

GROUND PLAN OF SANDRINGHAM PARTRIDGE PRESERVE NO. 2.

The shading indicates cover for birds—privets, &c. as in No. 1. Temporary boxes, Nos. 1, 2, 3, &c., will be removed when the shrubs have grown up sufficiently high to hide the guns. The shading shows the parts planted with gorse. The shading shows cultivated land, buckwheat, &c., as No. 1. 'A and 'B' indicate artificial pools. This preserve is in centre of large fields.

is every reason why you should shift the eggs from such nests as are in a dangerous position, and either add them in detail to those in your centre ground or set them under hens.

If your neighbours are friendly game preservers, and will act upon the same plan, so much the better; if not, you will always be the gainer by leaving your ground very quiet, and will, to a certain extent, attract their birds. When they show jealousy or greediness by continuing to kill close, this will only serve them right.

In conclusion of this branch of the subject, I should like to make what I believe to be a novel suggestion. This is the construction, alongside of artificial belts or cover, or even of your best natural breeding fences, of long, low penthouses, formed of rough 11-inch boarding, say three or four boards wide, supported on stout rough posts, and about two feet high in front and three at the back. On heavy soil, where the birds suffer much in a wet season, these would, I imagine, be a great protection for the young birds to run under during continued heavy rain, and if set on a slight slope, and the means are at hand, the ground under them could be covered with a slight coating of gravel. All the gallinaceous birds suffer greatly from wet feet, and I believe they

would readily take to such protection. They would, no doubt, be somewhat unsightly, but the use of Stockholm tar, which keeps a very pleasing and natural colour, and the rustic character of the short uprights, would greatly minimise their plain appearance. I should be much interested to hear the result of any adoption of this suggestion.

CHAPTER VI

SOME RECORDS AND COMPARISONS

I HAVE several times alluded to Holkham in the preceding chapters, and to Lord Leicester's admirable management of game. Probably no estate in all England has such a game record as this. From the wild goose to the rabbit, nearly every fowl or beast which the sportsman can desire has been killed there, and their habits and natural history, as well as the best method of securing them in a scientific and sportsmanlike manner, have been studied by the members of a family who for several generations have been known as representative types of English sportsmen.

Situated as it is, near Wells in Norfolk, on the northernmost point of that celebrated game county, overlooking the North Sea, with nothing between it and the ice-fields of the Pole, it seems, with its huge park and ample acreage, its woods of

fir, oak, and ilex, its inland lakes and salt marshes, to be the typical home of British wild birds, game and fowl, as it is of a hardy and vigorous race of men.

The Holkham records of partridge-shooting must, therefore, always be interesting to all who are fond of this branch of sport, and though individual bigger bags have here and there been made in other places, yet up to 1887, when it was surpassed at The Grange, Holkham held the record for a week's shooting of four days.

This estate furnishes, also, a strong instance of the effect of driving upon the number of birds, the more remarkable on account of the high standard of knowledge and management which had prevailed there before it became the exclusive practice.

By the kindness of Lord Coke, I am enabled to give some figures, which on this point are as startling as they are instructive.

Up to about 1875 walking up and half-mooning, with a rare occasional drive, were the methods pursued. After 1875 driving was more and more practised, until after 1880 it became the exclusive custom. In other words, taking two representative decades, from 1865 to 1875, driving was the rare exception; from 1880 to 1890 it was, as it still is, the

rule. The two best years of the first decade under the walking system yielded as follows :

Year	Partridges
1868	. 3,308
1869	. 3,385

The two best years of the second decade, after driving became the exclusive practice, yielded as follows :

Year	Partridges
1885	. 8,100
1887	. 7,512

As I am assured that no extraneous or artificial means have been introduced for the increase of the stock since the driving began, I think it is hardly necessary to go farther in order to settle for ever the question as to the effect of the latter system upon the totals of a partridge manor. I confess these figures show an increase which exceeds what I should have expected in partridges, although it is well known that with grouse the increases are, on many moors, much larger in proportion. The fact that 1887, known as the 'Jubilee' year, was the most productive season known, say for a quarter of a century, makes the value of the total for 1885 still more remarkable.

To turn to another famous game county, though vastly inferior to Norfolk in conditions of soil and

climate—Yorkshire—here is the record of the best week ever seen on Lord Londesborough's well-known estates in the East and North Ridings.

1887	Partridges	Hares	Pheasants	Guns
Oct. 4—Seamer . .	744	157	60	8
,, 5—Selby . .	522	10	60	
,, 6—Seamer . .	376	78	101	
,, 7—Selby . .	669	2	36	
	2,311			

I have included the totals of hares and pheasants for this week because they are typical of the country, and valuable as touching upon a point I wish to allude to later on, viz. the killing of hares and pheasants in the fields whilst out after partridges

Seamer is close to Scarborough in the North Riding, and Selby between York and Doncaster in the East Riding. This is undoubtedly the best consecutive four days' partridge-shooting ever known in Yorkshire. There is no other estate in that county which produces such totals, whether capable of doing so or not; and I may add that for many years past driving has been the exclusive practice on the Londesborough property, and that the ground is, for the most part, rarely shot over a second time.

Since the death of General Hall, who made the estate of Six-Mile Bottom so famous, that property has changed hands so often that I have been unable to find out whether the week of January 26, 1869, has ever been surpassed. As I have received it, the totals come to a little more than those given by Lord Walsingham in the Badminton Library, no doubt owing to the pick-up having been added. It is worth reproducing in the amended form.

1869	Partridges
January 26	419
,, 27	532
,, 28	606
,, 29	442

The date should be observed, for General Hall liked to shoot his partridges in the *last* week of the season, for two reasons, as I have heard: that, his friends being less likely to be engaged elsewhere, he could be sure of getting exactly the guns he wanted; and also on the more practical ground that, as he only shot the best ground over once, he was able to realise a heavier bag at this time of the year than any other, since, many birds having already paired, they would not come over in such large packs, and very frequently came in couples.

The question of hares as connected with partridge-

shooting I do not find discussed in any of the better known works, and I think one or two points are worth noting. It will be observed that no hares are mentioned in the record of Six-Mile Bottom, for the reason that they were absolutely insignificant in numbers, though this took place long before the passing of the Ground Game Act. Neither were hares mentioned in the marvellous records of the Maharajah Duleep Singh at Elvedon, for the same reason. From this we are forced to the conclusion that such great authorities as the Maharajah, General Hall, and his famous keeper, Jerry, all of whom made partridges their first consideration, thought a large number of hares a bad thing among birds. In this opinion I entirely concur, especially as I know that Lord Leicester and Lord Walsingham share it. In the Londesborough record the number of hares shot is large—especially on the first day—remembering that the sport took place since the passing of the Act; but I know that some years earlier the totals of hares on the same ground would have been much higher, and those of partridges lower.

Here is a typical week, one of the best, at Gedling in Nottinghamshire, the late Earl of Chesterfield's, in a county that has always been famous for hares, and

where, in the coverts, more than once over 800 have been killed in one day.

SEPT. 1868 (4 *days*)—GEDLING

Partridges	Hares
205	307
97	159
160	167
203	134

What would most modern farmers say to 300 hares killed in a day in the open fields?

Now Gedling is, I should say, every bit as good a country for partridges as any of Lord Londesborough's ground, and I think there is no doubt that, had partridges been as much studied at the former as they have been at the latter place, fewer hares would have been kept, and the birds would have done better.

Where farming is good there is always room for a fair stock of hares, but too many of these creatures, besides causing discontent among the tenants, disturb and foul the ground required for birds, encourage poachers and dogs, and, last but not least, are a great nuisance out partridge-shooting. When walking up, the dogs are constantly put off the scent of a winged bird; they are often tempted to chase a long way, tiring them out and leading to disastrous results, whilst a hare that escapes the shot will, in racing

across the field, frequently put up a quantity of birds as she runs through them. When driving, they only distract attention from the birds, cause shouting, chasing, and other evils, and when the shooters are expected to kill them as a matter of duty, you will often find your best men, having fired off all their barrels at hares, with empty guns at the moment when a covey comes over them.

Out of consideration for the farming interest, hares should be killed off as much as possible in the fields by the middle of October, as up to then they do very little harm. But after the sharp frosts set in they punish the root crops severely, their habit of nibbling ten turnips for every one they fairly eat causing each root so attacked to be destroyed by the frost.

The best way to kill them, as well as the most amusing, is to half-moon a large stretch of country towards a gorse-cover, osier-bed, or some small outlying covert which they take to readily, and then, having set nets round three sides of it, and placed some of your guns forward, to beat the covert. As the half-moon closes in, they will turn back and charge the line at full speed, and if you wish to save your partridges for a drive later on, you can spare them on these days, while you will get a great deal of sport and do a great deal of good by devoting yourself exclusively to the hares in this manner.

A farm will perfectly support a certain proportion of hares, and where none are allowed to live and there is great hostility to game generally, the farming will usually be found to be bad. I have seen, in certain parts of Scotland, where the tenants were all anti-Game Law Radicals, some of the worst crops imaginable. There were tons of weeds, but not a hare to be found, and very little of any other game.

The hare, with his four or five pounds of good flesh, and useful skin, is too valuable an animal to be treated as vermin, but he should never be allowed to disturb friendly relations with good farmers, nor to interfere with the interests of the partridge.

The many wonderful records given in chapters ii. and viii., vol. i., of 'Shooting,' in the Badminton Library may be studied with interest, and give rise to some reflections and comparisons. In the Holkham totals, for instance, it will be observed that in the years 1797, 1798, and 1800 more partridges were killed on the estate than in 1868 and 1869, the two best seasons of that decade. There are several scores, which I need not here reproduce, proving that very large bags of partridges were made at the end of the last and the beginning of the present century, both on the Continent and in Great Britain. A little later the totals of partridges begin to deteriorate, and those of

pheasants—which, up to then, were usually small—to improve with steady and wonderful rapidity, and it is only in very recent years, and in a very few places, that, in spite of the advantage of the breechloader, these bags of partridges have been ever equalled.

Does not this appear to corroborate the view, expressed in the last chapter, that in proportion as a keeper's time is occupied with pheasants, so will his partridges suffer? Of course, the reduced shelter to the birds afforded by more modern farming and the reclaiming and clearing of all waste or rough land, has a good deal to do with it, as no doubt has the ill-feeling on the subject of game which has been engendered in places among the tillers of the soil by injudicious and greedy landlords, as well as by agitation for political objects. But the re-increase of partridges in many places appears to show that these evils will right themselves, and the farmer may cease to look upon the gamekeeper as an atural enemy whom he only sees on the rare occasions when a few hard words pass between them in the neighbourhood of a covert overstocked with ground game.

I here append the totals of the best weeks at The Grange, Lord Ashburton's place in Hampshire, before spoken of, in 1887, the Jubilee year, as well as in 1891 and 1892, this estate having in those years

secured the highest record in the British Islands. The years intervening between 1887 and 1891 were bad breeding seasons everywhere, from which nothing can be gathered, as no effort was made to make big bags.

But first it will be worth notice to recapitulate the Holkham week of 1885, which up to the Jubilee year held the record :

HOLKHAM, 1885

Date	Beat	Partridges	Guns
Dec. 8	Branthill . . .	856	8
,, 9	Savory's Warham .	885	8
,, 10	Nelsons and Blomfields	678	8
,, 11	Branthill and Crabb .	973	10
	Total .	3,392	

Here is the account of the week at The Grange in 1887, which constitutes the 'record':

THE GRANGE, 1887

Date	Beat	Partridges	Guns
Oct. 18	New House . .	1,344	7
,, 19	Itchen Down . .	1,093	
,, 20	Totford . . .	732	
,, 21	Swarraton . . .	940	
	Total .	4,109	

In a description of this week, sent me by Lord Walsingham at the time he says, 'No red-legs, all

grey birds, one very weak gun in the team. Fifteen to eighteen short drives each day. I got 340 the first day, my best drives, 42, 62, 74. Another good gun would have made a difference of 600 in the week.'

It will be observed that the guns were only seven during this week, whereas at Holkham they were eight and ten. Taking the two teams all through, the form would not show much difference, there being two or three first-rate guns in each.

A second week at The Grange in the same year on four different beats yielded 2,604 birds to six guns. Adding the totals of the two weeks together, you get 6,713 partridges, or an average of 420 brace per day for eight days, the big week yielding by itself an average of over 500 brace a day for the four days !

The best week at The Grange in 1891, a bad breeding year, yielded only 1,432 partridges for the four days to six guns, of whom I was one. The two best weeks of 1892 were as follows :—

Date	Beat	Partridges	Guns
Oct. 4	Dunneridge . .	600	6
,, 5	Swarraton . . .	670	
,, 6	Stoke. . . .	569	
,, 7	Totford . . .	583	
	Total .	2,422	

Date	Beat	Partridges	Guns
Nov. 1	Chilton . . .	670	6
,, 2	Abbotstone . .	507	
,, 3	New House . .	583	
,, 4	Itchen Down . .	564	
	Total .	2,324	

In the first of these two weeks I was again fortunate enough to be one of the guns, and can safely say that in both years I never saw such good driving combined with such a high average of shooting. The two totals added together give 4,746 partridges, or a fraction under 300 brace a day for eight days.

In both 1891 and 1892 these totals for a week of four days' shooting at The Grange were the highest in England. The triumph of this estate—where under the present Lord Ashburton the excellent system of management inaugurated by his late father and Marlowe is more perfect than ever—is the greater, since Norfolk and Suffolk must still be regarded as the most favourable game counties in England. They are run very hard by Cambridgeshire, and the lighter lands of Essex. In the former county all the properties around Newmarket fetch immense sporting rents, and distinguished members of the Jockey Club, with many other visitors to the racing metropolis, may be seen

on the Saturdays and Mondays of the First October, Second October, and Houghton weeks, motionless behind the fir belts of that favoured country, ruminating, no doubt, upon the weights, acceptances, or odds of the great handicaps, but watching the flag of the driver over the turnips as keenly and closely as they do that of Mr. Coventry on the Heath.

The Duke of Cambridge succeeds his friend, the late General Hall, at Six-Mile Bottom. Mr. Henry McCalmont has purchased the beautiful estate of Cheveley from the Duke of Rutland at a figure which goes far to reassure owners as to the rehabilitation of values in land, and where he can occupy the intervals between the victories of his horse Isinglass in manœuvring over almost the finest partridge ground in England. The well-known Chippenham Park estate, which disputes with Heveningham (Lord Huntingfield's) the claim to be the birthplace of partridge-driving, is shared between its owner, Mr. Tharp, and his tenant, Mr. Warren De La Rue, who also rents Tudnam from Lord Bristol, whilst at Dullingham, the great Captain Machell, still one of the surest shots as he was one of the best athletes of his day, gauges the style of his neighbours behind a belt with as shrewd a judgment as he would apply to the weights of a handicap or the form of a two-year-old.

Stetchworth, Babraham, Ickworth, and Culford, with many another fair manor within the triangle of country which lies between Cambridge on the west and Thetford and Bury St. Edmunds on the east, testify, by the rents they command, to the magic value which the nurture of the little brown bird can bring to the land. Beyond, to the east, Elvedon and Merton, Riddlesworth and Wretham, Henham, Benacre, Sudburn and Rendlesham keep up their records, while past Lynn or Norwich, Sandringham and Houghton, Gunton and Melton lead you still farther north, to where, under the November moon, the earliest woodcock, making for Swanton Wood, dashes his weary breast against the light of Cromer, or the rare hooper, drifting with the snowstorm from the Arctic Circle, finds his first rest under the walls of mighty Holkham by the North Sea.

Dear as all this region is to the shooter's heart, favoured by soil and bracing air, there is many another county in England and Scotland where he for whom the partridge affords the favourite form of sport can find material in plenty ready to his hand.

In Scotland, Wigtown—long ago matched, with Lord David Kennedy as champion, against Norfolk

burgh, Ayr, Fife, Forfar, and Perth, all embrace, within the marches of their lowlands, fertile plains and valleys where, as he reckons up a plentiful bag of partridges, the shooter can see the leap of the salmon in the pool, or hear the cock grouse crow upon the range of moorland, which, crowned by the snowy outline of the Highlands, closes the distance.

In England, Yorkshire and Nottingham fall but a short way behind the Eastern counties, while Chester, Salop, and Stafford, in the north-west, Northampton and Hertford in the centre, Wilts, Hants, and Dorset in the south, have thousands of acres of stubble and fallow, turnips and clover, on which the coveys are neither few nor far between, and a bag may be made worthy of any team of guns.

In many of these there are spots where the opportunities for game, and partridges in particular, have not been studied or developed. Wherever there is light and well-drained soil, good water and a bracing climate, with thick fences or other natura nesting ground, there can partridges be made to increase and multiply.

Let landowners, large and small, carefully consider whether, by studying the production and protection of partridges on the principles followed by the few who have made these a scientific study as well as a

labour of love, they cannot, as the demand increases, add a value to their land which they have hitherto neglected or disbelieved in.

Land is, and must remain, however charged with burdens, the greatest of all luxuries. Whether for agricultural purposes its value will improve I have not the knowledge to predict, although I know that a few of the wisest and shrewdest men of the day have been investing largely in it during the late depressed period. But that as a luxury, for its amenities and its resources, its sports and its pastimes, its value will rise I have no manner of doubt. Sport is a large component part of that luxury, and partridge-shooting of sport.

So long as it is looked upon in this light, so long will the game laws be safe, and sport continue to contribute its valuable quota to the race of men who have, piloted by the instincts of the hunter, planted our flag all over the world. Sport, like charity, begins at home, at least to Englishmen; and it will be a bad day for us when the American millionaire, and still more the successful colonist, cease to look upon a landed estate in England, where they enjoy it in comfort and peace with their neighbours, as the goal of their desires. 'What I like about fox-'unting is, it brings people together as wouldn't otherwise

meet,' says Leech's little snob on his hired crock to the amiable peer on his thoroughbred hunter. The same may be said, above all kinds of other sport, of partridge-shooting. Rightly understood, carefully protected, courteously and liberally enjoyed, it should prove a bond, rather than a bone of contention, between all those to whom the plains and the valleys, the downs and the uplands of this beautiful country, are a profit or a pleasure.

No work on partridges could be complete without some account of the most up-to-date developments, and it will therefore be impossible to pass over the extraordinary sport enjoyed of late years on the estates of Baron de Hirsch in Hungary, which has been discussed and wondered at by all the shooting world, and in which several of our most prominent English shots have taken part.

Baron de Hirsch has himself supplied me with some details, and I am thus able to give a short description of his method of partridge-shooting, together with the record of last season's shooting on his various beats or estates.

As my readers are probably aware, the Hungarian estates are often of vast extent, and their shooting parties have always been conducted on a much more extensive scale than in this country, the items of the

bag including everything of the nature of European game, from the wild boar or bear down to the quail or fieldfare.

Hares have always been very numerous there, and have formed the object of special battues, in which, these animals being of unusually large size, heavy guns and large-sized shot are used. A large stretch of country is enclosed in a circle of as many as 400 men, and as the circle closes gradually in, the hares charge past, and have often to be killed at sixty to eighty yards. It occurred to Baron de Hirsch that the same manœuvre might, with modifications, be adopted for driving partridges on a large scale. He therefore set to work to lay out special preserves or centres for the birds, and on his estate of St. Johann he has brought this, by means both natural and artificial, to a degree of perfection never before attained in the production and realisation of partridges.

Prince Trautmansdorff had, however, in the same part of the world, long before this, made bags which would scarcely be credited in this country, the figures at times equalling those of Baron de Hirsch's parties; but these, as I understood from the Prince himself, when he was on a visit to this country, were mainly made by walking up, alternated occasionally with drives, and without employing the enormous

number of men, or the artificial means of dealing with a vast stretch of country introduced by Baron de Hirsch.

Prince Trautmansdorff's bags, however, often approached and sometimes exceeded 1,000 brace of birds in a single day, and I believe that from 300 to 500 brace in a day have from time to time been killed at several places in Austria and Hungary.

Baron de Hirsch's principle is to shoot, as one beat and in one day, an extent of from 8,000 to 10,000 acres, which is fed from a much larger region. Of these beats he has seventeen, distinct and separate from one another. The birds are netted, from September 1, on the outlying ranges of his estates, brought into the various centres of these beats, and turned loose.

The centres consist of squares of trees, or four belts joined at the corners, so as to make a square, with a road leading from each corner, the interior of the square inside the belts of trees being covered by a low rough covert. Outside this square the guns, from 120 to 150 yards apart, stand facing outwards, having, of course, artificial stands to shield them; each gun being therefore sufficiently far from his neighbour to be quite independent of him as regards shooting or picking up.

About 500 yards from the main covert are four smaller coverts, constituting a larger square, and the intervening space is sown with crops suitable for the feeding and harbour of the birds.

A very early start is made, and the drivers, consisting of 200 or 300 men and boys, who move with great rapidity, frequently running for long spells, are posted by the time the shooting-party arrive at the stands. At a given signal they start the first drive of the beat, embracing one quarter, lying between two of the roads, advancing in a gradually closing half-moon right up to the guns.

There are usually four drives in the day, including the four quarters, the first occupying half-an-hour, the remaining three two hours each, the men having for these drives to fall back and get round the fresh quarter of the ground. As will be imagined, the birds, disturbed from such an extent of land, approach the guns from all sides, and even from behind, having circled over the central covert, or swung away from one end of the long line of guns, and the utmost variety of shots is thus obtained.

Some of my English friends who have been the guests of Baron de Hirsch have told me that nothing in the way of English partridge-driving can give any notion of the exciting nature of these drives, immense

quantities of birds coming by you at every variety of height, angle and pace, while the complete freedom from all consideration of your neighbours' interests, and of disputed claims on dead birds, constitute a novel and very attractive element in the sport.

This system is of course quite out of the reach of any one in this country, where land is of such great value, either to purchase or hire, and Baron de Hirsch makes no secret of the fact that it is a very costly proceeding even in Hungary. But as a record of what may be done with partridges, and what, so to speak, ideal shooting may be afforded where hospitality and enjoyment are more considered than expense, by unusually able management and organisation, it is undoubtedly worth studying; and probably any good sportsmen who are fortunate enough to take part in it, ever ready, like all good men, to learn, may bring back some hints or details which may be of use to them on their own manors at home.

Baron de Hirsch's parties usually kill from 500 to 1,000 brace of partridges each day, his highest record for one day's shooting being 2,870, or 1,435 brace of birds.

As a curious supplement to our English records, we give below the totals for the Autumn of 1892 on

nine of Baron de Hirsch's beats of different descriptions at St. Johann.

—	Deer	Roe	Hares	Rabbits	Pheasants	Partridges	Quails	Ducks	Woodcocks	Totals
St. Johann .	1	12	1,534	1,062	1,476	5,752	19	34	58	9,948
St. Georgen	2	2	3,464	268	287	8,217	9	5	16	12,270
Neudorf . .	1	5	323	82	8	—	—	—	—	419
Zawod . .	—	2	593	193	254	1,386	6	—	—	2,434
Bur . . .	—	—	670	—	—	1,674	—	—	1	2,345
Kruschow .	—	4	156	—	—	—	—	—	—	160
Kutty . .	1	13	213	7	40	3	—	—	—	277
Brocks . .	—	—	369	324	59	12	—	—	—	764
Czary . . .	—	2	137	300	43	4	—	—	—	486
	5	40	7,459	2,236	2,167	17,048	34	39	75	29,103

CHAPTER VII

VERBUM SAP.

ADVICE cannot go much farther than to insist again upon the policy, not to say necessity, of cultivating harmonious relations with those whose business it is to extract profit from the soil, who live upon it, and who therefore, if not allowed to participate in some way in the benefits derived from a stock of game, will be apt to view its existence with a more or less hostile envy.

In these days we must bear in mind that shooting becomes every day more distinctly a matter of luxury, while the demand for it is constantly increasing, and its value rising in proportion. The game question lies very near the root of the land question, and the responsibilities of an owner or sporting tenant become more serious and delicate as time goes on. In my humble judgment the preservation of game should only be undertaken by those who are prepared to treat it as a luxury, and who can

afford to leave all sordid or pecuniary considerations on one side. The pleasures or profits arising from this beautiful sport should be as much as possible shared by those living on and around a game estate. In whatever way you choose to do it, you should so manage by tact, courtesy, and, above all, liberality, that farmers, labourers, and neighbours must perceive that their interests and yours are to a great extent identical on the question of game. The better your shooting the better for them should be the motto for both.

It should surely not be a matter of great difficulty to educate the farmers and labourers to this point of view. Partridges are no enemies to the farmer. They are largely insectivorous birds, and as they are a purely indigenous race it is very certain that they have their place in the balance of nature in these islands. Up to the time when the corn is ripe they feed entirely on insects and seeds of grasses, as well as of plants which, from a farming point of view, are weeds. The amount of grain which they eat, even where they exist in large numbers, is insignificant, and as they do not attack the corn in the ear, nor plunder the stukes, nor injure the stems of crops, their share of the grain produced, entirely picked from the ground itself, would in their absence be almost entirely wasted.

Good farming and a large stock of partridges are absolutely compatible conditions, and are often seen together, as witness the Wold beats of the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire, on such estates as Lord Londesborough's, or Sir George Wombwell's at Newburgh, and many properties in the lowlands of Scotland. This the farmers cannot deny. If they do, depend upon it they are discontented men and bad farmers, and consequently not worth having as tenants.

Again, the egg-stealer or bird-poacher is always a bad character, and, as a rule, a stranger to the locality. His trade is a nefarious one, and he therefore defrauds even those who are weak enough to supply him with his contraband goods. It should be easy by liberal treatment to make the labourers understand that collectively they can make more money by helping the game than by destroying it or surreptitiously conveying it away, in which case only a few of the least reputable among them make any profit.

But if, as I regret often to have seen, they are treated as mere machines for beating or driving, whom their landlord only sees during the one or two weeks' shooting in each year, if they are never addressed, or in any way taken into their superior's confidence on the subject, while they are rewarded for

their share of the week's pleasure by a miserable couple of hard-shot rabbits, and dismissed without a word of thanks for whatever good-will they may have put into a task where so much depends upon the existence of this quality—if they are treated in this way, what wonder if their attitude towards sport and shooters is merely one of sulky if not declared hostility?

Is it too much to suggest that something should be done at the close of a shooting week which would convert it into a joyful occasion for these men, in whose hands lies so much of the success or failure of what is after all a party of pleasure? As a rule I am afraid, though they are important members of the party, they are not sharers of the pleasure. Would not a small distribution of extra backsheesh, or even a good hot supper or dinner, be cheerfully contributed by the guests who have enjoyed the fruits of their labours? If the host did not like to let his guests contribute to this, would he not find it politic to contribute it himself? Would it be a serious addition to the heavy expense of entertaining a large party for a modern shooting week? And might it not prove the best invested portion of his outlay?

Again, why should not the guests contribute? At one well-known house in Yorkshire there is a 'box for the drivers,' and I have the best reasons for

knowing that no one ever grudges the voluntary contribution. As a matter of fact, the drivers at this place are the best I have ever seen. Cheerfully, quickly, and willingly will they slip round an extra two or three miles after a hot exhausting day to fetch in a big lot of birds which have broken out that they may give you one more good drive.

Nothing is a surer indication of the temper of the beaters than the time they consume in getting round and into their places for a fresh drive, whilst you impatiently pace up and down, munching grasses and fingering the lock of your gun ; and time is of great value and importance out shooting when there is a good bag to be made. Good beaters, whose movements are rapid and willing, contribute very largely to the success of the operations and the magnitude of the bag. They must be considered in a humane and friendly manner, due arrangements made for their rest and lunch, and some forethought exercised to prevent their being exposed for an unnecessarily long time to rain, snow, or cold when there is no object to be gained by it. One should remember that the contrast between their simple and frugal mode of life and the luxurious habits of modern country-house existence is never more closely brought home to them than on the occasion of a shooting party ; and one

cannot see them, as many of us often have seen, ordered off, after an illiberal lunch of bread and cheese and flat small beer, to stand in their places under a storm of cold rain or sleet, perhaps, thoroughly chilled and soaked until such time as the shooters, having leisurely finished their luxurious hot luncheon under a tent, shall be pleased to take their places—one cannot see this, I say, without feeling that such management is as impolitic as it is unkind.

A very little conversation with or encouragement to the beaters on each side of you will prove how readily they appreciate being differently treated, and how easy it is to rouse a little keenness in them for the sport in hand. I remember being amply rewarded on one occasion in Yorkshire for showing some consideration for the men temporarily under my charge, by an outburst of gratitude which called forth a delightfully quaint and original expression. It was a piping hot day, and the men, who had only to tramp while I enjoyed the pleasure of shooting partridges, were quite done up. I ordered a halt, and sent a trap back to the house for a can of beer, which, after a grateful rest in the shade of a huge tree, I was glad enough to share with them. One big burly chap, who had suffered much from the heat, and who spoke his Yorkshire very broad, exclaimed, after in his turn

he had drained a horn of ale, 'Eh, sir, but that went doon ma throat laike a band o' music.' Truly a 'nice derangement of epitaphs'—after which we all set to work again with a will, and made a good bag.

An all-round liberality in the matter of game I look upon as absolutely essential. It is not enough to present a farmer once a year with a hare and a brace of birds, especially when he has loyally supported and protected the game on his farm. The old-fashioned tenant-farmer on a generously conducted estate used to take a pride in the head of game killed on his land, loved to walk with the landlord and his friends to see the shooting, and was allowed to take away practically as much as he could carry home, after shaking hands with the party all round. This condition of things happily exists still in some places, and where it does exist the shooting is usually good. Close-fisted people cannot, however, be prevented from owning or renting land, though they live to learn that mean or avaricious treatment of men on whom their sport greatly depends is never rewarded by a plentiful stock of game.

I think I hear some captious readers say, 'Is shooting, then, to be confined entirely to the very wealthy?' My answer would be, on large estates and where big bags are desired, *undoubtedly*, and it

is probably better that it should be so. But the means of the man who either owns or rents sporting property need only be ample in proportion to the amount of land he has rights over, the number of men he employs, or of farmers and labourers he has to deal with. As remarked before, shooting is becoming daily more of a luxury, but luckily it is more universally popular, and therefore more widely demanded than ever.

It naturally follows that it commands a more certain price. It is eagerly sought and handsomely paid for by all sorts and conditions of self-made and hard-worked men. It is no longer the exclusive privilege of aristocratic landowners of ancient family and their friends or connections; and it grows more certain every day that the impoverished owner of a purely agricultural estate, who has, after paying all charges, to live upon the slender balance which may remain, cannot afford it. This may be sad, but it is true. The successful lawyer, doctor, stockbroker, or 'business man,' of whatever shade of politics, seeks nowadays the relaxation and distraction which his hard-worked brain requires in shooting or fishing. He comes into the market with his store of hard-won guineas, hires the land from the family of long descent, looks upon the whole thing as a luxury he

has fairly earned and can afford to pay for, and treats the dwellers on the soil with a liberality and cheerfulness to which they have long been strangers.

The avaricious parvenu, who at once gets to loggerheads with the farmers, underpays his beaters, takes but an interested view of the well-being of his humble neighbours, and looks to saving two thirds of his rent out of the sale of the game, exists no doubt here and there, but he is rare.

What is the result? The game laws, except in the hands of a narrow band of faddists, who may make a little capital by attacking them in low-class urban constituencies only, where the electors are as ignorant as themselves, have ceased to provide a popular banner or a political weapon, and stand on safer ground than they have ever done in the history of England.

It is now exactly seventy years since Sydney Smith employed his witty pen to expose the abuse, and urge the reform, of the game laws. But all the changes which he proposed have passed into law, and it should be remembered that the same humorous brain which suggested a 'lord of the manor for greengages,' and a batch of 'goose laws' carrying the same heavy penalties as the game laws of those days, also advocated making game a property, and the theft of it a felony.

Curiously enough, to find bitter hostility to the game laws, or supreme ignorance of the questions they involve, we have to look in these days to at least one of the highest legal dignitaries in England, or to a Member of Parliament who professes to champion the cause of the classes, with whom his habits, education, and ability permit him no genuine sympathy, and at whom he laughs in his sleeve when regarding the nakedness of the hook with which he leads them by the nose.

A judge can rightly order the court to be cleared when ignorant applause is uttered from the gallery, but he should at least be above uttering from the bench the claptrap which provokes it. A Member of Parliament may deliver diatribes against landlords and sport whenever he comes across a genuine grievance, but he should at least know something of the question, and not prostitute his undoubted talents by endeavouring to impose upon the dwellers in towns what are after all but the envious whimperings of a cockney journalist.

Such treatment of the subject is worse than malicious, it is stupid—'C'est pire qu'une faute, c'est une méprise.' It is, again, worse than stupid from a modern point of view; it is not up to date. It is as antiquated for attack as a mediæval man-at-

arms, as obsolete for capturing votes as the birdlime and stalking-horse of the 'Gentleman's Recreation' for making a bag of partridges.

Lord Coleridge, whose views upon the game laws have proved of immense value to some of the worst criminals in the country, but, so far as one can discover, to nobody else, had a charming experience of the popularity of his political views, as proceeding from the mouth of an English judge, some years ago in Liverpool. Being called upon for a speech after a political dinner, and surrounded as he was by good Liberals—it was before the Home Rule split—he conceived the ingenious idea, in that commercial city, of adding to his popularity by an unmeasured attack upon the laws relating to the preservation of game. His philippic was received in ominous silence by the twenty or thirty men present, constituting the flower of the Liberal party in Liverpool. Turning to his neighbour, he remarked that he feared his speech had somehow fallen flat. That gentleman observed that no doubt it had, since, with hardly an exception, every man in the room was a keen sportsman, and two-thirds of them preserved game.

The game laws constitute in a sense a political question from their close connection with the land question; but, in spite of the cheap and antiquated

policy of the gentlemen to whom I have referred, they can never again be made a party question. As well expect to make political capital out of the law of divorce, or the Deceased Wife's Sister Bill, which has long ago shuffled together the division lists of the House of Commons. In the midst of your polemics you find that the distinguished Radical barrister or manufacturer has taken heavily to game-preserving, while your Tory peer, preferring foreign travel or scientific study to shooting, has surrendered all his sporting rights to his tenantry.

The late Mr. Peter Taylor, M.P., who was about as good a judge of the relations between landlord, tenant, and labourer as a modern alderman would be of a Roman triumph, loudly demanded and eventually obtained the last Select Committee on the Game Laws, twenty years ago. His discomfiture was complete when it was found that the great weight of evidence given by farmers was in favour of retaining them. There has never been another Select Committee, and I make bold to say there never will be. It is dangerous to prophesy, yet I think it is not difficult to see that the Royal Commission on Deer Forests, which is now wasting the taxpayers' money in a search for good agricultural land among the misty corries and rocky passes of the Highlands, will have no

result, as it has no object, but to advertise the names of four or five obscure Members of Parliament as sham champions of supposed popular rights.

The truth is that all these questions are local, nay, more than local; they are so individual that they may as a rule be left to settle themselves by the *force majeure* of local opinion or knowledge.

Dealing strictly with the question as it stands to-day, we may be practically certain that it is out of the power of one class materially to injure the other in a matter like that of the preservation of game. There is no need to introduce politics or legislation, on account of the widespread knowledge of the subject already existing, diffused as it is among all classes of the population who have anything to do with it.

Really the Lord Chief Justice and Mr. Labouchere seem to be the only people who neither understand nor wish to learn anything about it.

Politics should be out of place in a book on sport, but I offer no apology in these days—when you hear the subject touched upon in every country house and inn-parlour—for insisting upon the fact that the ordinary laws of humanity and common sense are sufficient, when not neglected, to protect all the game in these islands, and to preserve sport wherever

there is open country enough to make it worth having.

My object has been to point out that in too many cases game-preservers play into the hands of the malicious agitation which town-bred politicians, relying upon the ignorance of their audience, are always ready to ferment, by neglecting to appreciate the human nature of the question, and by not sufficiently studying the point of view of those who live close around them, on whose co-operation they are absolutely dependent for a due enjoyment of their sport.

COOKERY OF THE PARTRIDGE

BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY

THE COOKERY OF THE PARTRIDGE

NOBODY who has been brought up on Aristotle can be indifferent to the danger of 'crossing over to another kind,' or confounding arts. Therefore, in beginning to deal with matters of the art of cookery, let me at once put myself under the protection of the names of two of the greatest men of letters of this century, Mr. Thackeray and M. Alexandre Dumas, who dealt with that same art, and by their action sanctioned the intrusion of all others, however far below them, who can make good their right to follow these glorious and immortal memories.

There is no room here for mere antiquarianism, and, therefore, the early cookery of the partridge may be dismissed in a few lines—all the more so for a reason to be mentioned presently. It is enough that the grey partridge (the only one which a true gourmand would ever admit to the table if he could help it) appears to be a native of Britain, and must

therefore have been very early eaten by Britons. It is classed by Gervase Markham—a great writer on all subjects of domestic economy, and no mean man of letters in the early part of the seventeenth century—with pheasant and quail as 'the most daintiest of all birds'; and from further remarks of Markham's it is clear that he had a sound idea as to its preparation. In the first place, he recommends for it and for all birds the process of 'carbonadoing' (grilling) on what he carefully distinguishes as a 'broiling-iron,' an implement which, I think, has gone out of our kitchens with some loss. The broiling-iron (which, as Gervase pointedly remarks, is *not* a gridiron) was a solid iron plate, studded with hooks and points much after the agreeable fashion of that Moorish form of torture which in his own time was known as the 'guanches,' and intended to be hung up before the fire, so that smoke, &c., could not get to the bird, while the iron background reflected heat against it. It thus to a certain extent resembled a Dutch oven; but, being open on all sides, must have been more convenient for basting, and must also have possessed that indescribable advantage which an unlimited and unchecked supply of air communicates to things grilled or roasted, and which is gradually, by the disuse of open fires, and the substitution of ovens under the

name of 'roasters,' becoming strange, if not unknown, to the present generation.

There is yet another point in which the excellent Markham shows his taste. He prescribes, as the best sauce for pheasant or partridge, water and onions, sliced proper, and a little salt mixed together, and but stewed upon the coals. 'To this,' he says, 'some will put the juice or slices of an orange or lemon; but it is according to taste, and indeed more proper for pheasant than partridge.' This at once shows a perception of the root of the matter in game cookery, a perception which was not too clear even to Markham's countrymen in his own day, and which, though we have gradually waked up to it, is constantly dulled by contamination from abroad. It cannot be too early or too firmly laid down that in the case of all game-birds, but especially in those which have the most distinct character and taste, the simplest cookery is the best. If anybody is fortunate enough to possess in his larder partridges proper, uncontaminated with red-leggism, young, plump, and properly kept, he will hardly be persuaded to do anything else with them than roast them in front of the fire, cooking them not enough to make them dry, but sufficiently to avoid all appearance of being underdone, for a partridge is not a wild duck. He will then eat

them hot, with whatever accompaniments of bread-sauce, bread-crumbs, fried potatoes, or the like he pleases; and those which are left to get cold he will eat exactly as they are for breakfast, with no condiment but salt and a little cayenne pepper. He will thus have one of the best things for dinner, and the very best thing for breakfast, that exists. The birds in roasting may be waistcoated, like quails, with bacon and vine-leaves if anybody likes, but with good basting and good birds it is not necessary. The more utterly 'simple of themselves,' as Sir John Falstaff said in another matter, they are kept the better. This is the counsel of perfection if they are good birds of the old kind, young, wild, properly hung, and properly cooked.

But counsels of perfection are apt to pall upon mankind: and moreover, unfortunately they are not invariably listened to by partridges. There are partridges which are not of the pure old kind—there are (fortunately perhaps in some ways, unfortunately in others) a great many of them. There are partridges which are not young, and which no amount of hanging will make so. There are partridges which have not eaten ants' eggs, or have in their own self-willed fashion not eaten them sufficiently to give them the partridge flavour. And there are human beings who are either incapable of appreciating roast

partridge or who, in the words of a proverb too well known for it to be lawful to cite it just yet, object to roast partridge always.

The universality of these facts, or of some of them, seems to be established by the other fact, that in the case of no game bird are there so many receipts for cooking as in the case of the partridge, which is also of unusually wide distribution. It is true that the Continental partridge is usually, though not always, a red-leg, and that the American partridge is, unless imported, only a big and rather plebeian quail. But these facts are only a greater reason for applying the counsels of *im*perfection—the various devices for disguising the intrinsic incompleteness of the subject under a weight of ornament. It must be confessed that the result is by no means always contemptible—with the proper appliances and in the hands of a skilful artist it could hardly be so. But with some exceptions to be noticed presently, it is always something like a crime in the case of the best birds, and something like a confession in the case of the others.

To the best of my belief there are only two forms of what may be called the secondary cookery of the partridge which bear distinct marks of independence and originality. One is the English partridge pudding, and the other is the French *Perdrix aux choux.*

Speaking under correction, I should imagine that the former was as indigenous at least as the bird. Puddings—meat puddings—of all kinds are intensely English; the benighted foreigner does not understand, and indeed shudders at them, for the most part, and it is sad to have to confess that Englishmen themselves appear to have lost their relish for them. There is a theory that partridge pudding was an invention of the South Saxons, and has or had its natural home in the region (very lately sophisticated and made 'residential') of Ashdown and St. Leonard's Forests. Either because of this localisation, or because it is thought a waste, or because it is thought vulgar, receipts for it are very rare in the books. In about a hundred modern cookery-books which I possess, I have not come across more than one or two, the best of which is in Cassell's large 'Dictionary of Cookery.' It is true that an intelligent cook hardly requires one, for the pudding is made precisely after the fashion of any other meat pudding, with steak as a necessary, and mushrooms as a desirable, addition to the partridges. But the steak, wise men advise, should not be cut up in pieces, but laid as a thin foundation for the partridge to rest upon. The result is certainly excellent, as all meat puddings are for those who are vigorous enough to eat them—only much better than

most. And while it is perhaps one of the few modes in which young and good partridges are not much less good than when roasted, it gives an excellent account of the aged and the half-bred.

Perdrix aux choux abroad is a dish not less homely, though much more widely spread, than partridge pudding in England ; and receipts for it are innumerable in all French and many English books. I find this succinct description (apparently half of French, half of German origin) in 'The Professed Cook,' third edition, 1776, by 'B. Clermont, who has been many years clerk of the kitchen to some of the first families in this kingdom,' and more particularly seems to have served as *officier de bouche* to the Earls of Abingdon and Ashburnham, from whom, let us hope, that he continued, even unto Zouche and Zetland. B. Clermont does not waste many words over the dish, but thus dismisses it :—

'*Perdrix à la braze* [sic] *aux choux.*—Brazed with cabbages and a bit of pickled pork, with a good cullis sauce. Savoys are the best for stewing. Such as would have them in the manner of *sowerkrout* must stew the cabbage very tender and pretty high of spices, and add as much vinegar as will give it a tartish taste. This last is commonly served in a tureen, and then it is so-called. Old partridges are

very good for brazing, and may be served with any ragout, stewed greens, and all kinds of purée.'

This is simple enough and correct enough, but a little vague. The truth is that *perdrix aux choux* is a dish which, especially in the serving, admits of a great deal of taste and fancy. For instance, take three of the most recent of French-English cookery-books—that of an estimable and very practical lady, Madame Emilie Lebour-Fawssett (who is often beyond praise, but who thinks—Heaven help her!—that the only reason why English people prefer the grey partridge to the red-leg is 'because they are English'), the famous 'Baron Brisse,' and M. Duret's 'Practical Household Cookery.' There is no very great difference in their general directions, but the lady recommends the partridge and bacon to be, above all things, *hidden* in the cabbage; the Baron directs the cabbage to be put round the birds; and the ex-manager of St. James's Hall orders it to be made into a bed for them. The last arrangement is, I think, the more usual and the best. There is also a certain difference in the methods; for while the Baron directs the cabbage to be nearly cooked before it is combined with the partridges, which have been separately prepared in a saucepan, Madame Lebour-Fawssett prefers a mere scalding of the cabbage first,

and then a joint stew for two hours, if the birds are young, and three if they are old, while M. Duret, giving them a preliminary fry, ordains an hour and a half of concoction together. But this is the way of cookery-books, and without it a whole library would be reduced to a very small bookshelf. The principle of the whole is obvious enough. You have some probably rather tough, and not improbably rather tasteless, birds, and you give them tenderness and taste by adding them to, or cooking them with, bacon and cabbage,—'poiled with the' pacon and as coot as marrow,' as the Welsh farmer observes in 'Crotchet Castle.' You season with the usual vegetables and sauces, and you add, partly as a decoration and partly as a finish, some sort of sausage—cervelas, chipolata, or *was Sie wünschen*. Every one who has ever eaten a well-cooked *perdrix aux choux* knows that the result is admirable; but I do not think that it is mere prejudice or John-Bullishness to suspect that the *perdrix* has the least say in the matter.

The partridge, however, is undoubtedly a most excellent vehicle for the reception and exhibition of ingeniously concocted savours; and he has sufficient character of his own, unless in extreme cases, not to be overcome by them altogether. If I were disposed to take an unmanly advantage of Madame Lebour-

Fawssett (for whom, on the contrary, I have a great respect), I should dwell on a fatal little avowal of hers in reference to another preparation—partridge salmis—that 'if you have not quite enough partridge, some cunningly cut mutton will taste just the same.' No doubt most meat will 'taste just the same' in this sort of cookery; but salmis of partridge when well made is such a good thing that nobody need be angry at its being surreptitiously 'extended' in this fashion. Salmis of partridge, indeed, comes, I think, next to salmis of grouse and salmis of wild duck. It is infinitely better than salmis of pheasant, which is confusion; and, like other salmis, it is by no means always or even very often done as it ought to be done by English cooks. There are two mistakes as to dishes of this kind into which these excellent persons are wont to fall. The first is to make the liquid part of the preparation—call it sauce, gravy, or what you please—too liquid, and, so to speak, too detached from the solid. The second is to procure body and flavour by the detestable compounds known as 'browning' or by illegitimate admixture of ready-made sauces. In a proper salmis (which, it ought not to be necessary to say, can only be made with red wine, though some English books desperately persevere in recommending 'sherry' for such purposes), the gravy should be quite

thick and velvety, and the solid part should seem to have been naturally cooked in it, not suddenly plumped into a bath of independent preparation.

Of the many ordinary fashions of cooking partridges it can hardly be necessary to speak here in detail. Generally speaking, it may be said that whatever you can do with anything you can do with a partridge. To no animal with wings (always excepting the barndoor fowl) do so many commonplace, but not therefore despicable, means of adjustment lend themselves. It is said that you may even boil a partridge, and that accommodated in this fashion it is very good for invalids; but I never tasted boiled partridge, and I do not think that the chance of partaking of it would be a sufficient consolation to me for being an invalid. Partridge soup is not bad, and it offers means of disposing of birds to those who in out-of-the-way places happen to have more than they can dispose of in any other way. But it is not like grouse soup and hare soup, a thing distinctly good and independently recommendable. Partridge pie, on the other hand, is excellent. The place of the steak which is used in the ruder pudding is taken by veal, and in other respects it is arranged on the common form of pies made of fowl; but it is better than most of its fellows. There will always be bold bad

men who say that pigeon pie is chiefly valuable for its steak, and chicken pie (despite its literary renown from 'The Antiquary') because of its seasoning. But the partridge has a sufficient value of his own to communicate it to other things instead of requiring to be reinforced by them. And perhaps in no case is this more perceptible than in partridge pie, which should, of course, like all things of the kind, be cold to be in perfection.

It should be still more needless to say that partridge may be grilled either spread-eagle fashion or in halves (in which case, however, as in others, it will be especially desirable to guard against possible dryness by very careful basting, or waistcoats of bacon, or larding); that he may be converted into various kinds of salad; that the process of braising or stewing may be applied without the cabbage being of necessity; that in roasting him all manner of varieties of stuffing, from the common bread variety with parsley (they use marjoram in some counties, and it is decidedly better) through mushrooms to truffles, are available. Partridges can, of course, also be potted, either in joints or in the ordinary fashion of pounding up the fleshy parts. They make, if a sufficient number is available, and sufficient care is taken in the compounding, admirable sandwiches, and like every other kind

of game they enter in their turn into the composition of the true and rare Yorkshire pie, from which nothing can possibly be more different than the mixture (by no means despicable in its way) which is sold under that name as a rule. The true Yorkshire pie consists of birds of different sizes (tradition requires a turkey to begin with and a snipe to end with) boned and packed into each other with forcemeat to fill up the interstices until a solid mass of contrasted layers is formed. The idea is barbaric but grandiose; the execution capital.

There are, however, divers ways of dealing with partridges which might not occur even to an ordinarily lively imagination with a knowledge of plain cookery. I am driven to believe, from many years' experience of cookery-books, that such an imagination combined with such a knowledge is by no means so common as one might expect. But the possession of it would not necessarily enable any one to discover for him or herself the more elaborate or at least more out-of-the-way devices to which we shall now come.

One of these (personally I think not one of the most successful, but it depends very much on taste) is a chartreuse of partridges. The receipts for this will be found to differ very greatly in different books; but the philosopher who has the power of detecting

likenesses under differences will very quickly hit upon the truth that a chartreuse of partridge is merely *perdrix aux choux* adjusted to the general requirements of the *chartreuse*, which are that the mixture shall be put into a mould and baked in an oven. The fullest descriptions of both will be found almost identical, the savoy cabbage being there, and the bacon, and the sausage. The chief difference is that, for the sake of effect chiefly, since the chartreuse is turned out of the mould and exhibited standing, slices of carrot play a prominent part. They are put, sometimes alternating with sausage, sometimes with turnip, next to the sides of the mould ; then comes a lining of bacon and cabbage, and then the birds with more bacon and more cabbage are packed in the middle, after being previously cooked by frying and stewing in stock with more bacon and the usual accessories. A simpler chartreuse is sometimes made with nothing but the birds and the vegetables, both bacon and sausage being omitted ; and it would clearly be within the resources and the rights of science to use the bacon but not the sausage, and to introduce other varieties. For, in fact, in the more complex kinds of cookery there are no hard-and-fast rules, and the proof not merely of puddings but of every dish is in the eating.

A dish which seems at first sight to savour of will-worship and extravagance is *soufflé* of partridge. Yet it is defensible from the charge of being false heraldry, for the partridge is a winged animal, and that which restores to him lightness is not against nature. But it is important to remember that it has to be made of young birds—*perdreaux*, not *perdrix*—and like all things of its kind it is not for every cook to achieve. Yet the main lines of the preparation are simple. The meat of cold partridges is pounded, moistened, warmed with stock, and passed through a sieve till it becomes a *purée*. It is then combined with a still stronger stock, made of the bones of the birds themselves, adding butter, some nutmeg, four yolks of eggs, and two of the whites carefully whipped, after which it is put into the soufflé dish and the soufflé dish in the oven, and the whole, as quickly as possible after rising, set before the persons who are to eat it. Much good may it do them.

The *perdreau truffé* which so ravished Mr. Titmarsh at the Café Foy long since (I cannot conceive what induced him to drink Sauterne with it, and after Burgundy too! it should have been at least Meursault, if not Montrachet or White Hermitage) was no doubt an excellent bird; but there might be others as good as he. The truffle, to my fancy, is rather for com-

paratively faint natural tastes like turkey or capon, than for a strong nativity like that of the partridge. Still, there are strong flavours that go excellently with this bird. I do not know that there are many better things of the kind than a partridge *à la Béarnaise*. All things *à la Béarnaise* have of course a certain family likeness. There is oil, there is garlic (not too much of it), there is stock ; and you stew or braise the patient in the mixture. Some would in this particular case add tomatoes, which again is a matter of taste.

I have seen in several books, but never tried, a receipt for what was called mayonnaise of partridge. The bird is roasted, cut up, and served with a *hot* green mayonnaise sauce of hard-boiled eggs, oil, tarragon vinegar, and a considerable proportion of good stock, with slices of anchovy added as a garnish. It might be good, but as the bird is to be simply roasted and merely warmed in the sauce, I should say he would be better by himself, if he were in thorough condition, and anything but acceptable if he were not. The sauce, however, would be something of a trial of a good cook, if that were wanted.

Few things lend themselves better than partridges to the fabrication of a *suprême*. As there may be some people who share that wonder which Mr. Harry

Foker expressed so artlessly, but so well, when he said, 'Can't think where the souprames comes from. What becomes of the legs of the fowls?' it may be well to transcribe from an American, at least French-American, manual one of the clearest directions I remember. It may be observed in passing that the American partridge is probably for the most part the Virginian quail, and that 'over there' they have a habit of eating it boiled with celery sauce or *purée* of celery, a thing which goes very well with all game birds, and more particularly with pheasant. But to the 'souprames.' 'Make an incision,' says my mentor, 'on the top of the breastbone from end to end; then with a sharp knife cut off the entire breast on each side of the partridge, including the small wing bone, which should not be separated from the breast.' The remainder of the bird is then used for other purposes, and the *suprême* is fashioned in the usual way, or ways, for there are many. This seems to be a better and more individual thing than the common chicken *suprême*, in which the breast is if used cut into separate strips, and the size of the partridge offers this advantage. On the other hand, the partridge *cutlet*—another fashion of securing most of the meat of the bird in a comparatively boneless condition—is begun at the other end by slitting the back

and taking out all the bones except the pinions and drumsticks, which are left. Cutlets thus fashioned can be accommodated in various ways, especially by sautéing them with divers sauces. The name cutlet is also given to less imposing fragments of the bird, which can be dealt with of course in almost any of the myriad manners in which cutlets are served. The best known perhaps and the commonest in books, if not best in the dish, is *à la régence*. This is a rather complicated preparation, in which the birds are subjected to three different methods of cooking, the results of which are destined to be united. The roasted breasts are cut into small round pieces which serve to give distinction to artificial cutlets, formed in moulds, of a *farce* or forcemeat made of raw partridge pounded with egg, mushroom, etc., into a paste. These cutlets are then sent up in a sauce made of the bones and remnants of the birds stewed with butter, bacon-bones, herbs, wine, and brown sauce, finally compounded with about half the quantity of celery shredded, stewed and pulped to a cream. The effect is good, but the dish belongs to the family of over-complicated receipts, which to my thinking belong to a semi-barbarous period and theory of cookery.

Partridge *à la Parisienne*, on the other hand, is sound in principle and excellent in effect. The birds

are browned in butter on not too fierce a fire; some glaze, some stock, and a little white wine are added, with a slight dredging of flour, pepper, and salt, and then they are simmered for three-quarters of an hour or thereabouts, and when done are served with the sauce strained over them. Partridge *à l'estouffade* is a little more complicated, but not much. The birds are larded, put in a saucepan with onions, carrots, bacon, herbs, stock, white wine, and, of course, pepper and salt, covered up, simmered till done, and served as in the other case, with the sauce strained and poured over them. To these two excellent ways may be added, as of the same family, partridge *à la chasseur* and partridge *à la Portugaise*, which are slightly different ways of cooking the jointed and dismembered birds in butter, with easily variable and imaginable seasonings—including in the last case, of course, garlic, and the substitution of oil for butter. They are all good, and always supposing that the cook knows his or her business well enough to prevent greasiness, there are no better ways of cooking really good birds, except the plain roast. But as there will always be those who love mixed, and disguised, and blended flavours, let us end with two arrangements of greater complexity—partridge *à la Cussy* and partridge *à l'Italienne*.

Partridge *à la Cussy* is a braised partridge with peculiarities. In the first place, he is boned completely, except as to the legs. He is then stuffed with a mixture of sweetbreads, mushrooms, truffles, and cockscombs, sewn up, and half grilled, until he becomes reasonably consolidated. Then a braising-pan is taken, lined with ham, and garnished with the invariable accompaniments of partridge in French cookery—onions, carrot, mixed herbs in bouquets, chopped bacon, the bones of the birds smashed up, salt and pepper, white wine, and stock. Into this, after the accompaniments have been reasonably cooked, the birds are put, protected by buttered paper, and simmered slowly, with the due rite of fire above as well as below, which constitutes braising proper. They are finally served up, as usual, with their own sauce strained and skimmed.

The Italian fashion is not wholly dissimilar, though it is usually given under the general head of 'baking,' as will be evident to every one whose idea of cookery has got past words and come to things. Indeed, though I have never seen it recommended, I should think it could be done best in what I am told is called at the Cape a 'Dutch baking-pot,' which is a slightly more refined edition of our old friend Robinson Crusoe's favourite method of cook-

ing. The partridges are simply prepared as if for roasting, but instead of being left hollow, each is stuffed with fine breadcrumbs, a little nutmeg, salt, pepper, butter, parsley, and lemon juice. A sheet of oiled paper being prepared for each bird, it is spread with a mixed mincemeat of mushroom, carrot, onion, parsley, herbs *à volonté*, and truffles. In the sheet thus prepared the bird, previously waist-coated with bacon, is tied up. Then he is put in a covered pan and baked, being now and again uncovered and basted. At last, after three-quarters of an hour or so, unclothe, dish, and serve him with the trimmings and clothings made thoroughly hot with stock, wine, and the usual appurtenances for such occasions made and provided.

I think that this is a tolerable summary of most of the best ways of cooking 'the bird' *par éminence*. There are others which *vitiosa libido*, or, if any likes it, refined taste, has found out. Thus, before making a partridge salad you may, if you like, marinade the birds in veal stock, tarragon vinegar, salad oil, and herbs, using the marinade afterwards as a dressing. And you may play the obvious tricks of filling partridges with *foie gras* and the like. In short, as has been hinted more than once, the bird, while requiring a very little purely decorative treatment, is

very susceptible of it, inasmuch as his taste is neither neutral nor, like that of waterfowl in general and the grouse tribe also, so definite and pronounced that it is almost impossible to smother it by the commingling of other flavours. I own frankly that to my own taste these flavour-experiments of cookery should be kept for things like veal, which have no particular flavour of their own, and which are, therefore, public material for the artist to work upon. I do not think that you can have too much of a very good thing, and if I wanted other good things I should rather add them of a different kind than attempt to corrupt and denaturalise the simplicity of the first good thing itself.

But other people have other tastes, and the foregoing summary will at least show that the catchword of *toujours perdrix*—a catchword of which I venture to think that few people who use it know the original context—is not extremely happy. For with the positive receipts, and the collateral hints to any tolerably expert novice in cookery given above, it would be possible to arrange partridge every day throughout the season without once duplicating the dish.

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